白の皇国物語
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白沢戌亥
不二まーゆ

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# Shiro no Koukoku Monogatari - WN Chapter 01-06

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# Chapter 1

Last Edit: 16 July 16

‘If only I was slightly stronger,’ I thought.

I had fought many times over.

And people whom I knew of died each time.

The man, who said that he wanted to become a chef, was skewered by several spears in order to protect me. His pained expression was something that can never be forgotten.

Another man passed away at the foot of the cliff under the rain after speaking to his lover from another squad. From what I heard afterwards, that very lover jumped off from the same cliff at the end of the war.

In the midst of the Empire’s battle, people who were working on the squad equipment’s repairs vanished under the light of the manifested magic furnace ( ). I was glad when that moment came; to be presented a poison-coated dagger by an abandoned infant who had become a blacksmith[1].

Dragon, human, beast-kin, celestial being, demon, everyone; I can only be surprised by how they die so easily.

The ideal which I wanted to carry out caused people to be killed easily and endlessly.

Even so, I continued to live. I will live until I attain the status of Emperor.

People are celebrating the day when the country was founded on this land. Over and over again, year after year, they celebrated.

Whenever this day arrived, although I try to remember the faces of the dead, I was unable to do so.

Based on memories before becoming the <King Sword>, I knew that I was not protected by the <King Sword>. Rather, I am steadily vanishing.

Optimistically, there is a way to separate myself from them, but what will the tomorrow of the citizens become?

Do the things they saved then still truly exist even until now?

Regarding that, I will never know until I am broken.

—Year 120 of Empire Calendar, publicized extract of the founding Emperor’s memorandum

End of Chapter 1

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# Chapter 2

Last Edit: 16 July 16

While walking in town, she found people gazing at her fixedly.

Anyone would feel their chests tightened upon seeing her, Meriela Lily Lindovorum's, facial expression.

This is the Duke City <Lindovorum>.

The Imperial Capital <Exceed> and the Holy City where the Emperor is brought forth <Theotocos> ().

Similarly to those two, it was a prominent city of the old Empire.

She was the focus of the city and also the only daughter of Carl von Lindovorum, feudal lord of the Duke territory <Lindovorum>.

Hime-sama, I'll be troubled if you go out by yourself

Hearing a voice from behind, Meriela spun around. Her silver hair, a special trait of the White Dragon clan, fluttered along with the breeze.

Vilia. But…

Over there was Meriela's childhood friend whom she thought of as a sister. However, the maid understood Meriela's status as being her master's daughter.

This is a public place. For my important people to inflict harm on me, that is…

Though Meriela said that to ease the other party's concern, the maid with long blue hair, Vilia, did not nod her head in assent.

With her hazel pupils, Vilia fixed her gaze upon Meriela's golden eyes and shook her head. Thus while pulling Meriela's hand, she led her till the nearest tract of green land. Their relationship was whereby such behaviour is allowed.

Leading Meriela to a nearby tree along the road, she spoke with her voice lowered.

Hime-sama, a lot of people still think of you as important. However, it’s a fact that there’re countless people from other territories streaming in here knowing that this place is safe. There may be some who harbours a grudge against the Duke among them.

After a slight hesitation, Vilia took upon herself to rebuke Meriela in a strong one.

She was loyal to the Duke, and harboured affection for Meriela who was brought up like a sister. But those were words which had to be said no matter what.

The invasion of our country by the alliance, the break-down of war since the Emperor’s death and the encirclement of the capital. So many country-shaking events have happened. Please take into consideration that people’s hearts too, are greatly shaken

——Um, that’s right

Realizing Vilia’s voice was trembling, Meriela nodded. Since the words came from her sisterly and beloved Vilia, it shouldn’t be a mistake. It was unthinkable of Vilia to have low opinion of her country’s people who were lacking in beliefs.

Though just a little, I wanted to see their state of affairs until father returns, but this seems to be difficult

Yes

Vilia shared the information she had collected by herself with Meriela.

Even now, the capital was still occupied by the nobles supporting the contemporary tyrant king, with the alliance troops encircling its surrounding.

Furthermore, the alliance troops continued their stare-down with this country’s Origin Nobles.

As a consequence, the public order in various places worsened.

Though none of these events was something new, there was no doubt the situation was becoming worse.

Um, thank you

Though Meriela said so, they were not the information which she truly wanted (to hear).

Deep down her heart, she hoped that there would be good news even if it was just one piece of it.

However, it wasn’t Vilia’s fault just because it wasn’t fulfilled.

——The truth was, I wanted to say something to reassure Hime-sama’s mind even if there’s one but

Once again, Vilia understood what was necessary for Meriela. However, even though she understood, there was nothing she could do.

It’s alright. I’m fine

Grasping Vilia’s hand, Meriela reassured her repeatedly.

Though it seemed like pretending to be strong, she wasn’t able to say anything more than that.

◊◊◊

<Arutodesutenia () Empire>, east of Almada () continent.

The upheaval in the country began when the previous Emperor, Enenfaube ( ) passed away without a successor.

This country emulated the founding Emperor, no matter where, as long as someone possessing white hair appeared, he would be called a <White> and pushed to be crowned as Emperor.

However, during Enenfaube’s reign, unable to see the figure of the <White> who should have originally appeared before him, perhaps in the midst of anxiety and despair, he passed away.

Thus his son, although without the rights to, took the throne. He was recognized temporarily until the true Emperor, a <White>, was discovered, though in the end as people had feared, he was a foolish ruler.

He dissolved the parliament which gave him advice on state of affairs, and placed his own supporters at the top departments of the troops. Regarding the opposing nobles, he forcefully exiled them one by one while displaying a confrontation stance against the four Dukes who were uniquely, out of the Emperor’s jurisdiction.

Meriela’s father, Carl, was among the four Dukes.

In response to the Emperor’s conduct, the other three Dukes besides Carl withdrew their allegiance towards the royal family, and became an independent power from within the Empire. They rejected all interference from the royal family, taking the standpoint of affiliating only to the country.

A state of civil war broke out between the pro-Emperor and anti-Emperor factions.

And in response, the western democratic country raised an army. With the betrayal of the western nobles, their war potential passed through the Empire’s territories, drawing close to the capital <Exceed> in one breath.

Overlooking the alliance troops’ transit were ten people with the reputation of being the impetus of founding the country, the Origin Nobles chosen based on loyalty to the fatherland and their contribution. It was one of
them who understood that the country’s foundation would be shaken from a glimpse of thing.

Nonetheless, a situation which would shake the country once again occurred.

The demise of the Emperor who usurped the throne.

The alliance troops lost the justification of defeating the deceiving tyrant who oppressed citizens of a friendly nation . In that case, the raw materials attained from various negotiations of post-war period would be meagre. Concurrent with the purpose of not burdening the compensation for war expenditures, they remained behind in the empire’s territory.

The pro-Emperor nobles who barricaded themselves in the capital pretended to protect the empire’s public order, while in actual fact, were taking the citizens as hostages.

At this point of time, the Origin Nobles, who were opposing the Emperor, could no longer tolerate the rampancy of the alliance troops.

This resulted in a confrontation between the Origin Nobles’ troops, composed of three Origin Nobles as the core, and the alliance troops at Mira plains, northwest of the capital.

Without the Emperor leading the country, in a circumstance where politics and economics were in the midst of an impending outbreak of war at the outskirts of the capital, the country was unable to function as per normal.

When migration of refugees from each lord’s territory began, with the exception of those under the Emperor’s control, the downfall of the organisation in charge of public order led to bandits jeopardizing everyone’s livelihood.

The four big dukedoms began accepting nearby refugees, and moved to break the current deadlock of affairs. However, they were too powerful, and without a doubt, large amount of blood would be spilled.

However, no matter how much blood was spilled, without any other choices available, they would not hesitate to do so.

Indeed, that was if there weren’t any other choices.

◊◊◊

He was alive.

Yet, he continued living aimlessly.

Among the innumerable people, he existed as just a merely single gear.

And thus, he lost his life.

The world continued moving even after losing one of its gears.

Its continued movement meant to say that was worth of the gear.

It was probably right since many people believed that to be so.

However, there might be hope existing somewhere within his mind.

The he who had given up recognizing people, himself, and finally his last raison d’etre, it is unbeknownst to anyone whether he even held onto a small desire.

Therefore, he is alive.

Prior to isolating himself with multiple mental walls[1], he wanted to recognize people, recognize himself, and to live on despite being tired of living. That is, at least until he finished his role.

◊◊◊

Bordering the corner of Duke Lindovurum’s castle acting as the White Dragon imperial residence, there existed a water spirit lake called <Undine Lake ( )>. Usually powered boats would be floating within the vicinity of the lake, however their figures could not be seen now.

Several small boats were pulled into the ship depot, and the pier used by the castle, which could be noisy due to the unloading of daily necessities depending on the day, was quiet.

At the foot of the small lighthouse in front of the pier, Meriela crouched down hugging her knees.

Grasped tightly in her hands was a letter corresponding from an officer working in the capital’s air base.

The details of the capital’s status quo were written inside the letter, crushed to the point of being crumpled.

The mercenaries assembled by the pro-Emperor nobles were walking around the main street acting as if they owned the place, and looting shops’ articles outside the sights of the palace guards.

There were beggars wearing rags and lying down at the back alley, and a young

girl laughing madly while being semi-nude after seemingly injected with some medicine.

Mercenaries occupying the house during the husband's absence, raping both the wife and daughter, and though the palace guards came rushing, the wife had to turn them away due to her daughter being held hostage.

However, due to the palace guards, soldiers and mercenaries disliking disputes, nothing was done. If they were to go wild now, the capital would be further hit by storm of outrage. To prevent that from happening, though annoying, it could not be helped that a few unlucky victims had to be sacrificed.

Though the upper stratum of military departments, controlled by the pro-Emperor nobles, ordered the capital defence unit, it was rejected due to the absence of a person with supreme authority, the Emperor. Conversely, it means we are unable to take any actions.

The capital defence unit did not fall into their hands. It may be one of the few fortunes in this current situation that the gigantic fort cannon is not facing the Mira plains where the alliance and friendly troops are.

If it's you, you may know what will become of the supporting-nobles' territories.

They disregarded the taxation law established by the successive Emperors to increase their own profits, imposing heavy tax on the citizens.  And now, that gold is entering the mercenaries' pockets.

The gold acquired from the act of imposing heavy taxes on the citizens, killed and oppressed them.

Meriela, princess of the prideful White Dragon.

You must never come to the capital.

I understand. If you were in my position, you may have pierced through your own throat by holding a fountain pen. That's why, you cannot come to the capital, and you cannot see the figures of the citizens.

But if you are to come here, I want it to be the time when you can save this place.

The time when we see your figure in the sky, we will discard our soldiers' equipment and stand up as just citizens.

We are waiting. We will continue waiting, without fail.

◊◊◊

That list of words was enough to tear apart Meriela's heart.

Although she understood that people were being oppressed, the letters received from friends of various places increased her new misery.

If this continued on, the country would fall apart. But, Meriela wasn't able to do anything.

Being a noble, she received education. It included fostering of love for both the country and citizens.

And because of that love, she couldn't help not suffering.

Uu……

She bit on her own lips to inflict harm onto herself and a pain coursed through her body which was oozing blood.

Bu……

She clenched her fist, and with her nails digging into her palms, blood trickled out.

Not yet……

Gathering magic, she cut her back of her hand with a thin blade.

She did not truly understand the meaning of what she just did.

She reasoned that by wounding herself, she could share the people's pain.

Though whether that really is the reason, would it not been seen as merely escaping from a third-person view?

Gomennasai, gomennasai

Drawing her knees strongly to herself, and hiding her face downwards, Meriela's beautiful clothing was stained by her tears.

It was painful not being able to do anything, and that pain might somehow turned in real pain.

Gomennasai… gomennasai…

At this moment, she might have known someone else was wounded.

Thinking this way, she felt an enormous sense of bitterness just from her own existence.

Like a child, Meriela curled up her body. Nothing less from a dragon tribe, she wouldn't die even if she flung herself into the lake in front of her.

The fact that she wasn't able to do anything, she could only continue moaning about it.

Until that moment.

◊◊◊

*Bashan*, there was the sound of water.

Meriela raised her head, surveying the surrounding. She had thought waterfowls were feeding on baits but there wasn't a single one in the vicinity.

Due to Meriela of the dragon tribe possessing unstable and strong power, wild birds avoided her.

So what could it be, Meriela thought as such and stood up.

——

While returning to the castle, she glanced about restlessly, trying to ascertain the identity of the sound. At the moment her vision came across a foreign body, she stopped.

At the stairways connecting the castle’s landing area and the pier, something seems to be caught in the pillar beneath the pier.

There were a person’s clothes swaying slowly.

Eh

Meriela opened her big eyes, her breathing coming to a stop.

Her heart beat such that she could even hear her pulsation clearly.

Some…Someone…

It was a miracle that she could speak.

At the very least, that was what she remembered in the distant future.

Is there anyone around?! There is a person who’s nearly drowned!

She screamed, and began running.

The heart of this girl during this time did not grate.

◊◊◊

Raising his aching body, his face grimaced while muttering a groan.

–Did I wake up?

Although the words he asked himself was somewhat inappropriate, at the very least, that was the words which left his mouth first and foremost. Was he awake? No, that was not the issue, in the first place, what was he doing?

Confirming his limbs had not gone numb, he inhaled the air to ascertain its scent. There was a faint sweet smell.

Next, *kasakasa* he wet his dry lips — he felt pain. He distorted his face due to the indescribable pain, and finally lying himself down, realized the place was an extremely luxurious bed.

He looked around timidly, trying to see the articles’ quality inside the room, and

without a doubt, they were compatible expensive furniture.

The furniture of unknown materials gave off an overwhelming sensation. It could be replaced with the word dignity.

In the corner of his mind, he thought these were beyond his means, and accelerated his thinking process further.

(What on earth…)

Dreadful. Whatever the pretext was, he couldn’t grasp it, or so he thought.

People may experience a sense of dreadfulness when their feelings of being unable to calm down cross a certain threshold.

Where is this place?

And while thinking where this place was, he wondered who he is.

Even though he should know, he couldn’t grasp it. He couldn’t understand, and when he tried to, his self-consciousness weakened, making it impossible.

As he was about to begin immersing himself to remove the distortion mixed within his thoughts, a small yet audible sound could be heard from the door in the corner of his vision.

–!!

KonkonKonkon. Simultaneously, his shoulders trembled.

Although he was worried on how to response for several seconds, the door opened on its own accord.

Excuse me

With the door opened, his focus fell upon a desirable woman with pale sky-blue hair tied into a bundle, approximately in the latter half of her teens.

He knew — it was in his memories — she had a pleasant appearance that signified her as a maid. Without an indication of expecting a reply from him, she entered into the room with that single notice. It seemed as if she was treating his

existence similarly to the furniture around them, and without giving him a single glance, proceeded towards the large window opposite of the door.

Ignoring the fact that the carpet absorbed the sound, the sound of her footsteps was extremely faint. Upon arriving by the window, she pulled aside the thinly-clothed curtain, nonchalantly looking at him.

What happened was as expected; she met the gaze of the man who didn’t even take his eyes off her once.

A mutual silence, and only a few seconds after, at the moment when he realized the pupils of her large opened eyes were reddish-brown —

Hi, hime-samaa!!

–!!

Crying out loudly while rushing out of the room, her graceful figure until now was completely ruined,

The sounds of footsteps *dotadota* and cries of Hime-sama Hime-sama continued far away.

With the young man being alone, he could only tilt his neck.

◊◊◊

Vilia almost fainted when she heard that her mistress, who went out for a change of mood, came into contact with a man whom she found, at the water spirit lake at the corner of the castle serving as the White Dragon imperial residence.

However, while worrying about the man, Meriela seemed to have regained her spirit, more so than her usual. Therefore, Vilia was unable to harbour any ill feelings towards the man in question to a certain degree.

With a butler’s assistance, the doctor employed at the castle would perform a medical examination twice a day. Vilia’s task was to report to Meriela after comprehending the man’s condition from the duo.

There was times when she would confirm the man’s state herself, as she realized

Meriela would be relieved this way.

I believe his complexion seems good today

Just from the reports of the doctor and butler adding on one after another, just slightly, Meriela displayed her smiling face.

Since the start of the civil war, Vilia wasn't able to see Meriela's smile despite much effort.

By no means was Vilia harbouring ill feelings towards that man, yet for the first time, she felt envious of him.

And thus today, she chased after her mistress who threw away her work upon hearing the awakening of that man. As expected, Vilia felt envy from her heart.

◊◊◊

–You! Is your body alright?!

Towards the woman who flung open the door and rushing in with a question, he was rendered speechless.

Since she went to call her hime, might this person be her?

With her pretty blushing cheeks on her white skin, and her moist bright golden eyes looking directly into his, her delirious sigh gave off an indescribable charm.

While a little surprised from feeling that, he showed a slight smile.

Eeto….

A light green dress fitting for young women; simple yet giving a splendid impression, though it might be difficult to run in this manner. He was perplexed whether to praise her for running till here in high-heels or to admonish her for the dangerous act.

In actual fact, before she arrived at this room, several servants were thinking about the same thing. Though there were some among them who wanted to dissuade her, she had run quickly away in front of them.

They came together to give her a rebuke in the future. To rebuke her was the duty of the vassals, according to Carl’s policy.

Meriela, not knowing that was in store for her, slightly approached towards the man. Towards the other party holding a vigilant stance, she was unable to display either a cautious approach or a straightforward attitude.

Do you understand my words?

Meriela took a breath to calm herself down and asked a question once again.

In the case whereby words were unable to get through, telepathy was necessary reach a mutual understanding. However, to perform telepathy, raw material for a day worth of translation magic had to be gathered.

But it seemed unnecessary this time.

Ye, yes

In front of Meriela, the man definitely nodded his head.

I’m glad, jyaa, can you answer some questions?

Yes, I don’t mind

Thank you

Upon sitting down on the chair besides the bed, Meriela ordered Vilia to prepare some paper and writing materials.

After presenting stationery decorated with ornament, Vilia withdrew out of the room on Meriela’s order, whereupon she turned towards him with a serious expression. With that look, she turned in the direction of the man’s forehead, the truth which she was really interested in laid there.

(Yoshi)

Even if her priority was to extract a certain truth, for Meriela who was taughtTo risk your all to protect the citizens regardless of good or evil since young, she had to care for the young man who collapsed at her clan-

controlled territory without fail with their reputation and pride at stake.

Not wanting to miss a word, Meriela approached towards him. Placing her hand on the bed, her face drew near, wearing an expression of not permitting any lies.

Was it because he just woke up, she can't say his complexion was good due to his pale face. If possible, it would be best to quickly finish her task and call the doctor.

Having decided, she began immediately. With the pen in her hand, she started her questioning.

Firstly, what is your name? Are you from the opposite shore, <Kuriado>?

Kuriado [2]…?

The man tilted his head. And with that suspicious pronunciation, he did not seem to know the name of the town. However just to be sure, Meriela asked again for confirmation.

Yes, are you from there?

Iya…Probably not

I see, then where are you from? Before that, what is your name?

From his appearance, he did not seem to be lying.

Having confirmed that, Meriela inquired even further. Originally, she should have asked that from the beginning, yet to have forgotten about it, she could only laugh bitterly inside her heart.

(It is pointless to be impatient. Since he has yet to get used to this place…)

Towards Meriela whose thoughts were somewhere else, the young man tilted his neck.

Name…?

Having being asked, part of his memories resurfaced. Information about characters forming his name rose up to the surface of his consciousness.

Trying to pronounce these words —

–Tsu

However his throat wasn’t able to give out all the sounds.

To be more accurate, he couldn’t bring out the pronunciation.

–?

Though his mouth could move, the pronunciation wouldn’t come out.

Somewhere within his consciousness’s, a thought ofthat is different, that is not my name caused him to pause. Though his mouth wanted to speak out, his body was preventing it from doing so. With his consciousness and memories clashing against each other, he was assaulted by a sense of dizziness momentarily.

U…

Are, are you alright?

Though Meriela became flustered at his appearance, she was troubled over whether the inquiry would be cancelled.

During this time, the man further pursued his thoughts.

(I can’t remember my name?)

Nay, the memories were also missing. He thought, recollecting his memories, his name was on the tip of his tongue, but when that portion was about to come out, it became pure white.

Rather than being unable to remember, he realized that it didn’t exist from the beginning. He was shocked.

Seemingly concerned, Meriela continued looking at his face.

The young man noticed her appearance, though with that being said, he couldn’t do anything.

However, shifting his eyes suddenly and at the moment when he saw the golden eyes of the bright girl whom he had never met until now, his voice came back.

–Leti…val. Letival

Letival? Is that your name?

(That’s my name?)

He wasn’t confident. However, he couldn’t find any other words to represent himself.

He was bewildered. But, for Meriela who doesn’t know of his inner thoughts, smiled and nodded once. Moving her pen, the first thing to be noted down on the paper was his name.

Meaning person of the moonin ancient language huh. It is a good name, though I don’t know whether your parents are priests of a temple, it is probably related to your eyes that have a gentle colour

Having a good name was proof of being born out of love.

If she inquired about the name at the temple and government, Meriela thought she might be able to obtain a little more information, hence she further added on next to the name.

Eyes…?

Even if his eyes received such assessment, Letival who had not looked into a mirror once, couldn’t understand his appearance. However, Meriela failed to recognize the fact that Letival wasn’t aware of his own appearance.

Towards Letival’s attitude, Meriela remembered his slight sense of discomfort, and replied while sliding the pen.

Yes, you have beautiful silver eyes

Being told beautiful, those were her heartfelt words. She might be captivated by those eyes holding a gentle light inside them.

But Meriela covered up her heart and asked a question which she had always wanted to. That is, not only her, but something which could greatly affect the whole country.

There is just one more thing I want to ask but…

Thereupon, she hardened her facial expression and let her eyes fell upon the stationery. Before long, after nodding to decide her thoughts, she began to ask a question while looking at him with upturned eyes.

Her voice slightly trembled.

Is your –hair white by birth?

Not understanding the meaning behind her question, Letival could not help but tilted his head.

The he of this moment did not know that her question would greatly change his fate.

Thus by the time he realized this, he was at a point of no return.

There was a person who once held such fate in his chest, seeking the possibility of creating a country.

And now, without knowing his fate, a young man holding possibilities appeared.

And it was because this young man’s life was recorded, that the Legend of the Empire of the White which people knew, loved and at some point of time forgotten, existed.

End of Chapter 2

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[1].

[2]Same pronunciation but written differently. The former was in katakana, used for pronouncing foreign names,  while the latter was in hiragana .

# Chapter 3

Last Edit: 17 July 16.

He did not think of hating the sky.

Regardless of the town being dead quiet or people raising voices of anguish, the sky remains unchanging.

Ora!! Walk quickly!

Looking down on the road below, mercenaries were leading children with ropes tied around their necks for a walk. There were rumours of slaves being moved on board ships, slipping through the eyes of the navy at the port. Apparently it was true.

Among this country's people, races which were unrecognized by other countries were not few. Once they were taken out of the country, it would be difficult to rescue them.

The number of ships heading out towards open sea which was next to the capital was by no means small. There were too few navy warships to control all these ships, and their movement were restricted by the army headquarter which was giving out such orders in succession.

They could be ignored on the pretext that the army's authority belonged only to the Emperor, though originally in the case where things were in perfect operation, information which ought to be passed down should not have been isolated.

Do you want to be beaten to death like your brother and sister!?

Hii

That was precisely why such violence could be gotten away with.

However, a spy of Duke Lindovorum slipped into the capital, and as always recorded any misfortunes which he saw befalling onto the people of the capital, before sending it to his master.

He was at the rooftop, a blind spot of the mercenaries; however without the presence of the army or the palace guards, there was no means of rescuing those children.

If he were to act, his existence would be known to the mercenaries. In that case, he might impede the mission of the spies who were similarly hiding within each organisation of the capital, thereby making it impossible to fulfil their original mission.

The capital's information was the lifeline for those outside.

He had to take appropriate action at the appropriate time, and by no means was he putting on air about his own existence.

–Please forgive me

Muttering words to no one, they disappeared without reaching anyone's ears.

◊◊◊

Vilia changed into civilian clothes and headed out towards the city.

She lightly descended from the assistant seat of the magic transportation vehicle which exited from the castle, bowing to the butler serving as the driver.

Well then, we shall proceed

Un, do be careful

Towards the butler whose red hair was mixed with white ones, Vilia saw him off with a smile.

For the princess's errand, she hitched a ride on the assistant side, yet the appearance of her looking out of the window in dissatisfaction make her seemed like a sulking child.

That behaviour gave off a sense of nostalgia, with her attitude resembling a child being sent out on an errand for the first time. Failing to notice this, Vilia began walking with her ponytail waving like a tail.

Such a mystery huh

Towards Vilia’s retreating figure disappearing into the midst of the street, the butler soliloquized.

While steering the magical vehicle from the public parking space to a familiar shop, he was reminded about the figure of the young man who was picked up by the princess. Since the young man’s arrival, the castle had become slightly livelier.

Out of consideration for Meriela, the white imperial residence continued to be wrapped up in a mourning-like silence. Be it stewards, butlers or maids, they merely passed their days peacefully.

But that was broken apart by just a single young man.

Besides working, Meriela visited the young man and her downcast face would slightly look up from the exchange of words.

Despite Vilia floating an expression of displeasure, she had performed most of the tasks of looking after the young man accurately on Meriela’s order. The scene of her preparing baked sweets while spilling out complaints in the maid resting area was also seen by him.

If this development becomes any bigger…

She understood that such a thing was impossible. However, she could not help wishing so.

Just because she did not know his face, she was not that cold-hearted to not feel anything from hearing about an outsider’s misfortune. Nor was she that heartless to not wish of wanting to change when she understood why someone was crying[1].

For those who do not know–flames of purpose dwelt in the people’s minds when founding the former country.

If you save someone, that someone might in turn save a person important to you.

Even if your hand can not reach, someone else hand might be able to.

–When my work is finished, should I pay a small visit?

At the end of today’s schedule, he would be at his favourite pub.

Regardless of retired or active, soldiers frequently gathered at the shop which was opened by his former superior after retiring from military. If it was that place, it was possible to get some information.

Even if you cover your ears, you can never fool the voice inside you

Such words were coming out from the instructors’ mouths in the midst of that painful marching drills. (TN: Vilia’s memory)

And by facing away from her true feelings, she had betrayed herself.

Doesn’t seem like anything change…

Nevertheless, there was no regret for not doing anything.

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Entering the branch office of the government, there were people here and there.

They probably visited the branch office for various important matters, though in general, their expressions were dark.

The clerk stationed at the reception stood up upon noticing Vilia’s figure.

May I know your business here?

Though the clerk barely floated a smile, the place’s atmosphere did not soften.

While feeling sympathetic, on Meriela’s request, Vilia handed an application document for validating a person’s identity to the clerk.

I would like to submit these documents

The clerk retrieved the documents from the envelope, and upon recognizing them belonging to the acting feudal lord Meriela, put them back into the envelope once again. If the surrounding people noticed Vilia’s connection to the Duke, it might cause unnecessary disturbance.

There were people who visited this place to ascertain the conditions of their relatives in the capital. In reality, the possibility of acquiring information according to one's wish is low, but there were few people who would give up.

Will it be alright for the results to be delivered?

Considering it was a request from the acting feudal lord, the documents would naturally be processed with priority. It might not even take one hour of waiting time.

Ie, I will wait

Understood, please wait at the seat there

At the far back place pointed out by the clerk was a reception area. With partitions obstructing views from the surrounding, it became impossible to tell who is there.

I am in your care

Giving a bow, Vilia sat at the designated seat. In the corner of the spacious reception compartment, she opened a telegram placed on top of the desk.

As I thought, admission to the capital is still restricted

The white dragon palace differed from the other Dukes' castles in a sense where it did not function as a government, hence the opportunity for Vilia to view government bulletin was few. However she understood from the contents that nothing had improved.

The function of the government itself was running. Entrusted with administrative authority from the Emperor and because under the pretext of acting as regent, the ministries of domestic affairs, foreign affairs and military did not lose their functions.

The bureaucrats complied with the former proclaimed Emperor's orders, and refused the directives of the supporting nobles, citing we have not received the imperial decree for suspension

However, it was undeniable that the capital's functions were under considerable

limitations. Several functions had been transferred to neighbouring cities. At the very least, the use of trials to administer justice could no longer be performed in the capital.

If not, the supporting nobles could distort the law to injure people.

The antagonism between the bureaucrats and supporting nobles should still be unfolding within the capital even now.

It was because of this confrontation that the worst case scenario was avoided.

No matter what the field marshal, regent for the army's authority who had lost his foundations (), and the armed forces staff headquarter said, the unit at the scene would not move. With the administration of justice forbidding any impartial judicial activity, its use was limited in the capital. Though legislation came up with proposals, without the presence of His Majesty who possessed the authority, it was a hopeless situation[2]

Seeing how well the situation was progressing within the country, Vilia wanted to burst into laughter.

She could not help but sympathized with the supporting nobles who seized the capital city which had inevitably become a caged castle. They underestimated this country too much.

From a certain viewpoint, the emperor seemed to hold absolute authority, though in the definition of the Empire's laws, that was not the case.

Because of the first article of Empire's basic law, it became that way.

Everything in the Empire belongs to the Emperor

In a country, its ruler is not the Emperor. Only when an Emperor is there, does a country exists[3].

Therefore, even if the supporting nobles tried to hold onto the country, it was nothing more than an empty husk. It held no significance and only maintained the status quo. The ability to receive orders cannot be invoked without the Emperor.

Still, for how long can you endure?

Though people might believe that the capital could be recovered, anEmperor was still necessary.

A capital is no more than a city; the Emperor is the country itself.

If that is not the case, nothing can be done. Contrary, the situation can be changed immediately if that is true.

For that reason, Meriela began to move.

Vilia trusted Meriela.

If that man becomes the Emperor, a <White>, Hime-sama can be saved

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This may not seem like it but I have some confidence in this tea

While saying that, she brewed red tea with practiced movement. Pouring boiling water and tea leaves into the warm pot, the splendid hue of the tea could be seen in just a short time.

(She is skilful.)

Because she was a noble’s daughter, Letival thought with certainty that she would let a maid brewed the tea; hence he could only admire Meriela’s magnificent skill.

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Itadakimasu

Lectival accepted the porcelain cup together with the saucer, but he suddenly noticed from the tea’s surface that it was about to spill over. Thus he searched for the cause by looking at Meriela’s hands, and his attention was caught by the ink () sticking onto them.

Her hands were covered with small wounds. The wounds and her nails which were permeated in ink contrasted excessively with Meriela’s lovely figure.

What is the matter? –Ah!

When Meriela felt Lectival looking towards her hands, she remembered her dirtied hands which were permeated by ink, and hurriedly push the tea onto Lectival.

I, I am sorry

Seemingly ashamed, she concealed her flushed face behind her hands and murmuredI am truly sorry. Such things do not happen all the time… The permeated ink would not come off by simply washing, hence she should not feel liable, but she continued keeping her face down.

Ano, I am not particularly bothered by it

Be it Lectival calling out to her cheerfully or complimenting the tea being delicious after drinking it, Meriela did not raise her face. However, only her ears were dyed red, what kind of expression was she concealing was up to Lectival's guess.

Until not long ago, the room was shrouded in an awfully serious atmosphere, yet the interior was too quiet now.

However no matter how Meriela tried to hide, he noticed the multiple wounds on her hands, causing his smile to fade away from his expression.

–Those wounds, how did you get them?

He asked a question to hide his uneasiness, whereupon Meriela gave a troubled smile after seeing her own hand.

I am fine, my tribe has high recovery strength

Obviously that was not the answer Lectival wanted.

And the expression of Meriela who was on the verge of tears was something which he never wishes to see.

Without a clear reason, it was unpleasant watching such a face.

Although you have a high recovery strength, can such small wounds not be healed?

You are really mean

However the present him had no words to make Meriela smile.

He did not know any clever speech or gestures.

Therefore he tried to provoke her at most. Though it could be understood that such tricks were too inept immediately if you thought a little, the pair could not sense that at that point of time.

It has nothing to do with you

Well…

With eyes overflowing with the strongest intent unlike before, Lectival stared into Meriela’s golden eyes.

Meriela received such gaze for a moment, but unable to bear it before long, she averted her eyes.

–You truly are a mean person

It’s my loss. I’ll keep quiet since you showed such a face

To be silenced from that extent, Lectival had yet to become an adult. Nor did he want to become such an adult either.

Your especially pretty face is ruined

You should choose a better place for flattery. In a place without any ambiance, I can only be embarrassed

Though Meriela said so, her face was blushing, seemingly extremely embarrassed.

Towards Lectival who said such words with calm face, her sense of shame was stirring up increasingly.

Could you please show me your hands just a little?

Eh? But…

Lectival forcibly pulled Meriela's hands towards himself while she was hesitating. Such a thing would not have happened had Meriela resist seriously, but with a surprised face, she was not able to oppose the young man who had grasped her hands. Until now, there had not been anyone who treated her this way.

Everyone treated her like a princess, even her army's superiors and instructors just barely adopted an appropriate attitude, perhaps she was known as the 'daughter of white dragon duke' except during work and business. It might be a first, for the man in front to not change his attitude.

Regarding your skin being white, does this part becomes rough easily?

As Lectival said so, he wrapped both his hands around Meriela's.

His body warmth was gradually being passed to Meriela.

–Uu

That was very embarrassing. If she were to concentrate on the transferring of body temperature, it was as if she was feeling the harmony between intimate couple.

Her entire hands were wrapped in kindness, and the places which felt rough pains were caressed in gentleness. This should not be a healing magic but a simple loving caress, yet the wounds on Meriela's porcelain-white hands were cured in succession.

It was a miraculous spectacle. To cure wounds inflicted by magic; is it not a miracle bestowed by God?

I may get angry from hearing those words you know?

Lectival did not know the reason behind the phenomenon which he caused.

He only knew it was not a miracle.

I think it is unnecessary to feel the pain of the people whom you want to protect

Meriela's shoulders shook greatly. To obtain forgiveness from feeling pain was her own shallowness, and to be seen through by the man whom she met for the first time caused a shock. It made her body react and her heart sway.

But unless I understand their pain…

It is a pseudo experience, though it is another thing if the sensation is shared. And even if that was not the case, in a true sense, is it not possible to not understand the pain they felt?

Jya, am I unable to understand their suffering for a long time?

It was a mistake to ask him.

But there were no other alternatives besides listening. It was to that extent that her heart wanted an answer.

Is it so important for you to understand their suffering?

Meriela could not comprehend Lectival's words.

How can someone be a states-person if he cannot understand the citizens' anguish and joy?

Is it not obvious? If not…if that couldn't be done, then they will not recognize us as rulers

Is that really the case?

The expression of the inquiring Lectival was calm, exactly opposite that of Meriela's. The answer within him did not waver from Meriela's words.

If you can understand the people's suffering, what will become of them?

–…

That was a point which she was not able to deny.

Can their wish be known even if she understands their pain? However, even if she understands, how she goes about fulfilling their wishes; is yet another question.

You are mistaken about your methods and purposes which you may regret later. What you ought to do is not feel the false sense of people's suffering, but rather to consider ideal ways to remove their suffering

But, that being the case, what people want is…

As for what they want, I think listening to their voices is the only choice. Letting your imagination run wild, injuring yourself, saying you are trying to understand at your own convenience, you are only just mistaking your methods and purposes

For Lectival, the reality of this world from Meriela's talk was nothing more than other people's affairs after all. If she were to hear those words, she may fly into a rage. For a person oblivious to reality, his knowledge is limited to what he knew by asking.

However his reality was the slender white hands placed within his hands where pitiful scars and her expressed grief were carved onto them.

He reflected on the thought of doing something about reality, thus arriving upon this solution.

To begin with, you should put yourself back into perfect condition. If you were to collapse, you would not be able to save people who have chances of being rescued

Are you comforting me?

Not in the least, I am not that good of a person to comfort you to that extent

Lectival gently released Meriela's hands which did not have a single scar remaining.

You are not mistaken. Was there not something you acquired from injuring yourself? Afterwards, you just have to use it well

And if I am not able to use it well?

It was an ill-natured question.

Despite that, Lectival did not break his smile.

What you acquired from suffering setbacks can furthermore be used well. No matter how many times you fail or give up, as long as you do not resign yourself, opportunities will appear. As of now, you are still living; you can walk and talk, and just like that, smile gently

–?

Meriela touched her face reflexively.

Was she smiling? Supposing she was, then what kind of expression was it?

Was it the same expression during the time of peace or was it a smile that she, as a respectful young lady, wore for business?

Without changing her question, she asked Lectival again.

–What kind of face am I making now?

Lectival answered with a nod after showing a manner of slight consideration.

One that suits you; a lovely smiling face

Meriela, with her palm on her cheeks, felt her temperature and was convinced her face was dyed bright red.

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Hime-sama, about the matter regarding that man…

Vilia called out to Meriela who was walking down the corridor.

Three days had passed since the man named Lectival had awakened, and the doctor had approved of extending the visiting hours. It turned to the point of Meriela taking advantage of the extra hours. She passed her time speaking with Lectival about his origin, though midway she seemed to grumble about the

country’s status.

But thanks to that, Meriela became calmer compared to before. The opinion in the castle was unanimous, that this was the effect of the young man saving her.

If there was an exception, it might be Vilia.

Ee, did you found out anything?

At the very least, from the information terminal of the administration, nothing can be discovered

It was uncertain whether Vilia sounded displeased because Meriela, whom she considered as a younger sister, was taken away by the opposite sex or simply due to her task being unable to turn up any results.

At least Meriela seemed to pass her judgement on the latter.

I see, not much time has passed yet so there is no helping it. Thank you Vilia

She clasped Vilia’s hands and showed a smile as thanks for her effort.

Vilia bit her lips secretly when she noticed the various wounds on Meriela’s hands had disappeared.

Not just Meriela’s mind, even her flesh was healed by that young man. Vilia couldn’t be considered a child for refusing to admit this truth; even an adult would not readily admit it.

Her reasoning was clouded by the regrettable feelings piling up inside her heart.

If that person is truly a <White>…I…

Her mistress seemingly decided on something, Vilia was not able to reply anything to her words.

Between the two who were raised like sisters was a gap in position which by no means can be filled.

End of Chapter 3

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# Chapter 4

Last Edit: 17 July 16.

The cheering of citizens who regarded the Empire as a friendly neighbour invigorated the allied troops. They demolished therebel armywith great vigour and pushed on towards the capital in one fell swoop.

Though the nobles in the centre reformed the defence line multiple times, the soldiers of the nobles army who are shouldering this defence line are conscripted commoners. Naturally there is no morale. On the contrary, there are soldiers who publicly seem to want to ally with the allied army. ——Well I'd like to say you reap what you sow but we won't do such dishonourable thing.

Mirella sneered in self-derision yet only her eyes shook in sorrow.

The defence line is riddled with flaws, and as I thought, it can't stop the allied army.

As collusion and betrayals appeared one after another, the result was the defence line being repeatedly breached. Before long, the supporting nobles would begin shifting towards the capital for the sake of protecting their own necks. In a situation where allies could not be trusted, it became difficult to fight systematically, let alone maintaining the defence line.

As the core of the Emperor's army, the imperial guards fortified the defence in the capital, probably to hold out until reinforcement from frontier nobles came. Holding onto such fleeting expectations, the remaining forces faced the supporting nobles in the capital.

But their real misfortune began from there.

–In the morning about six months ago, while the supporting nobles were in the midst of gathering war potential for the capital's absolute line of defence, the reigning Emperor passed away abruptly.

Be it suicide, assassination or a natural death, the cause had yet to be determined.

At the time when the allied army had already surrounded the capital, there wasn’t a method to know the situation inside accurately.

But to be troubled here, even the allied army felt the same.

In any way, their arbitrarily just cause for invasion had vanished.

Although the allied army wanted some privileges from the Empire for defeating the evil dictator, it lost its great cause for forcibly invading the Empire since he died. Raising a mobilization of military force without a great cause, they will be viewed as evil by their own people this time. Within each nation’s government, when its internal opposition parties caught news of the Emperor’s death, they noticed it was a scheme to drag down their political power.

Whatever the cost was, a victory was essential to persuade their people.

The allied army bearing the intents of their nations’ governments continued encircling the capital under the pretext of improving the deteriorated public order caused by the confusion of the Emperor’s death. This carried on for about a month.

In that one month, the allied army dispatched troops to governments of their homeland, and though the ceasefire pact should have been concluded with the frontier nobles they invited, several new problems would arise.

Even if the frontier nobles were satisfied with payments of certain percentage of reparations promised beforehand, the various nations’ governments weren’t granted the economical privileges they requested.

With their promises being different, the nations pressed the frontier nobles to hand over the now deceased Emperor’s body to the allied army. Any less and they have no obligation to fulfil their promise; it was something they firmly refused to back down from. If the nobles were unable to secure the body, they would similarly lose their just cause. Letting the country and its people be ruined any further, such a thing can never be allowed.

But the body of the Emperor had already been buried by the supporting nobles.

The emperor’s mausoleum was deeply underneath the capital, and with the exception of the royal family and some of the ceremonial staff, entry was denied.

In short, the capital was invaded to seize the reigning Emperor’s body, and it is necessary to divulge the mausoleum with military might.

However, if the frontier nobles invaded the capital, their troops may get caught in the allied army’s assault. The nobles insinuated that many times whereas in reality, their troops were gathering around the capital in succession, and before one knew, their numbers surpassed that of the allied army.

Harming their own Emperor was tantamount to treachery, and they borrowed other countries’ strength to prevent that, but there was no reason to allow other countries’ troops to remain on their beloved country’s land any longer. For the nobles, the allied army was a hindrance.

Withdraw immediately since your business has finishedsuch a frontier nobles army, andobtained nothing but a small reparations, hence losing the people’s support just by spending redundant military costs such composition from opposition of each nation’s government were newly born. The circumstances further increased the extent of turmoil.

An enormous sum of funds and materials were necessary to mobilize the military for foreign campaign. This cannot be carried out readily regardless of how large the country is. Although each nations’ government tried to contribute to the war expenditure for bond issuance, their homelands’ economics were already overshadowed by cost of the ongoing invasion operations they started, hence it was impossible to consent to a small sum of reparations.

In the end, the condition stating for the balance of minimum income and expenditure from the alliance was refused by the Empire, hence they did not retreat.

On the other hand, the frontier Origin Nobles army which continued to standoff the allied army had several problems internally.

I see, everywhere is full of problems.

Without hesitating to expose her own shame, Mirella continued saying such words.

However, before she could open her mouth, the door was knocked several times.

Though Mirella cowered as if cold water was poured onto her, she panicky smooth over her expression when she felt Lectival's gaze and gave the permission to enter towards the door.

–Hime-sama, I brought you tea.

The one entering the room through the door was the maid from before.

On the push cart was an insulated bottle and tea pot filled with hot water and confectionery of tea-cake. They were then presented before the pair.

Th, thank you…But…

If something is important during emergency, is it fine not to talk to the master too? Besides, he is still recuperating. It is too unreasonable.

Pointing that out to the maid, she looked back to Lectival who had a startled expression.

Looking closely, his complexion had turn paler compared to before.

My apologies. I seem to have rushed.

Iyaa, nothing…

Don't worry about it, though Lectival was about to continue, looking her way, her eyes had an air of admonishment, hence his words was cut off.

Let's take a short break.

The room's atmosphere slightly relaxed from Mirella's words.

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That moment of rest became an unforgettable memory for Lectival and Mirella.

Lectival did not view Mirella as a daughter of a noble but rather as a woman, while Mirella felt Lectival was a man who should have possesses some sort of power.

For the both of them to start mutually recognizing each other as an individual, it

was a huge turning point for them.

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(TN: Repeated from part of chapter 3)

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Saying so, she brewed red tea with practiced movement. Pouring boiling water and tea leaves into the warm pot, the splendid hue of the tea could be seen in just a short time.

(She is skilful.)

Because she was a noble’s daughter, Letival thought with certainty that she would let a maid brewed the tea; hence he could only admire Mirella’s magnificent skill.

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Itadakimasu.

Lectival accepted the porcelain cup together with the saucer, but he suddenly noticed from the tea’s surface that it was about to spill over. Thus he searched for the cause by looking at Mirella’s hands, and his attention was caught by the ink () sticking onto them.

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permeated ink would not come off by simply washing, hence she should not feel liable, but she continued keeping her face down.

Ano, I am not particularly bothered by it.

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–Those wounds, how did you get them?

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I am fine, my tribe has high recovery strength.

Obviously that was not the answer Lectival wanted.

And the expression of Mirella who was on the verge of tears was something which he never wishes to see.

Without a clear reason, it was unpleasant watching such a face.

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He did not know any clever speech or gestures.

Therefore he tried to provoke her at most. Though it could be understood that such tricks were too inept immediately if you thought a little, the pair could not

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Mirella received such gaze for a moment, but unable to bear it before long, she averted her eyes.

–You truly are a mean person.

It’s my loss, since showing such a face means to say ‘be quiet’.

To be silenced from that extent, Lectival had yet to become an adult. Nor did he want to become such an adult either.

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It was a poor question of stubbornness.

Despite that, Lectival did not break his smile.

What you acquired from suffering setbacks can furthermore be used well. No matter how many times you fail or give up, as long as you do not resign yourself, opportunities will appear. As of now, you are still living; you can walk and talk, and just like that, smile gently.

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Without changing her question, she asked Lectival again.

–What kind of face am I making now?

Lectival answered with a nod after showing a manner of slight consideration.

One that suits you, a lovely smiling face.

Mirella, with her palm on her cheeks, felt her temperature and was convinced her face was dyed bright red.

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Establishing an emotional bond, the distance between the two shortened.

With her heart lightened up a little, Mirella began relating the situation of the country to Lectival.

The alliance army was surrounding the capital and the Origin Nobles army of the frontier was confronting the alliance army, while the supporting nobles' army of the present Emperor was secluding themselves within the capital.

Disruption of the supply line; the capital which was held hostage; and the difference in overwhelming war potential. Time elapsed continually while the three way battle stagnated due to various conditions to avoid fighting.

And before one realized, five months had passed by.

The allied army's solders rampaging as their supply route was cut, with the citizens within the vicinity suffering the brunt of damage.

The battle of the capital turned into a critical situation.

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But really…this is a problem of our Empire after all. However the place you are at now is within the Empire, surely you can't pass off as being unrelated.

–

Lectival remained silent with regards to Mirella's words.

Honestly, it exceeded his imagination that contrary to her heart shrieking, she suppressed it to talk about the subject. In the extent where there was severe difficulty to accept reality, one would think whether it was a bad dream.

The world which he was born into, iyaa, within his memories, at the very least his surroundings of before was peaceful.

Though it was a world where people killed one another, hoodlums violating girls and children oppressing their parents, nevertheless it must have been peaceful since numerous people failed to notice that they were in the midst of peace.

But it was different here.

There were people frightened by the ongoing war in a place not far away from this room. And in his present surrounding, there might not be many humans who thought they were at peace.

In the emptiness to the extent of sorrowful, the hazy sense of reality of his blood welled up simultaneously[1].

However, this world was undeserved to be thought of as sorrowful.

Sou, this wasn't about his body not falling into a distant world. As of now, that was the situation of the world he was in.

–As I thought, this world is none of your concern?

–!

To these words, he looked into her golden eyes.

Seemingly testing him, scorning him, and for some reason asking him. He felt as

if his heart was being taken hold of by the seeming sad narrowed golden eyes.

Various emotions swam back and forth in his eyes, by no means was it the unexplainable answer that she seek from him.

It isn't about being unrelated…but…

He was at a loss for words.

He was fearful of how he should reply.

He felt that there will be no turning back after he replied.

The mouth which spoke so well until now had dulled after coming to face with reality.

Ee, oh well. You are too ignorant to not know anything. I am the same as you but I know this country more than you.

Mirella withdrew her body and captured the outside view of the window with her eyes. Her world<reality> was over there.

Perhaps in her eyes, a world which Lectival cannot see was spread out before her.

I…

He was accustomed to getting rebuke for being ignorant.

Even in the beginning of work, he was looked upon with eyes that seemed to say 'you are a hopeless person as expected.'

But human as a living thing do not remain ignorant forever.

In a good or bad sense.

Living things living in ignorance and even feeling fear. That is humans.

Fear in learning the truth and accepting it.

But there was also a similar fear, living without knowing the truth.

No matter which fear is received, whether he refuse it — his primitive nature was distinguished accordingly.

His true nature — was as expected.

Then… will it be fine for you to teach me the world you know of?

He dreaded being knowledgeable, only living idly.

Driven to a corner by that fear, his instinct shouted for him to absorb everything he needed to know.

What he wanted to do, even without looking at his sorrowful-like eyes, a roar raised somewhere within him.

Why? And what do you wish to know?

She noticed his then weak presence had grown profoundly and emphasized, and erasing all her expression, she stared into his silver eyes.

It was likely her intention to ascertain his temperament with those words.

He might have noticed her expectations. Then again, he might not have noticed either.

However, he had only one answer.

The search for the guideposts in my path of life. The keys to the future that I desire and the door which you seek for a tomorrow.

Thus he let out a sigh and continued.

Instinct.

Willpower.

Everything, for the sake of living as myself in this world.

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At this point of time, Lectival took a step forward.

And he was taught by the maid, Vilia, every day.

History, law, religion and general knowledge.

Oblivious that the country was named <Arutodesutenia>, he did not even possess the general knowledge which a child would naturally have. Hence, Vilia was surprised and at the same time, interested in him.

Vilia was aware that her mistress, Meriela, held deep interest towards Lectival. She even felt jealous.

Though she doubted that the vow to protect Meriela which she had imposed on herself was breached, she followed around with her mind.

Yet while concealing that, she attended to Lectival.

She failed to realize, that the negative interest due to jealousy and desire to monopolize, would cause people to change.

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Lectival as a young man was constantly shrouded with an air of pessimism.

If the words from a soldier to a major general in the white dragon lords' army working for the castle's defence command centre were to be trusted, it might have becomethe air of someone who had a near-death experience, moreover at a close proximity[2].

Vilia was appointed as the person in charge of providing assistance and her figure could be seen throughout the day. During the time she was not teaching him various things as a teacher, she evaluated his displayed expression as as if he is an old person who understand death.

In that calmness, without a single attachment to the world, living because he was alive. His appearance was similar to that of her grandfather, who had passed away many years before, during his twilight year.

Succeeded by a married couple worthy to protect the house, having adorable grandchildren, even at the moment of facing death, her grandfather had an envious-like peaceful smile.

Seeing that young man showing an expression like her grandfather’s, she held indescribable fear and repugnance.

Hime-sama

She called out so to her mistress who was walking down the corridor and her face which spun around had an extremely pleasant complexion.

Although just a week ago her face was pale like a ghost, her present complexion was different compared to before the start of the meaningless dispute. Everyone in the castle recognized this as the achievement of the youth.

Although Vilia had ill feelings regarding him, she acknowledged his merit.

Ah, Vilia

But if there was to be a problem,

How’s he doing?

…

It was as if her mistress these days could see nothing else but the young man opposite her.

–His appetite has returned considerably. The doctor said it might be fine for him to eat the same food as us

Sou, I’m relieved. Father shall be returning soon, so until then, I’ll leave him in your care

–Yes

With her mistress heading towards her own room as it is, Vilia saw off her retreating figure.

It would be a lie to say there wasn’t any dissatisfaction towards her mistress.

However she hesitated to reveal it and naturally directed her dissatisfaction elsewhere.

I wonder if you can handle studying the empire’s law today?

Her words faded along the uninhabited corridor without being heard by anyone.

She headed towards the castle’s document warehouse.

Once there, she borrowed several bulky law books and returned to the young man.

—Eh, is this everything?

Yes, it is Hime-sama’s idea. I’ll have you remember all of the major parts.

Presented with the large law book of the empire, Lectival’s face cramped up, and confirmed many times over if it was a mistake.

Even so the maid standing before him appeared solemn, hence crushing his reverie, and furthermore, she added on several documents.

To live in this country, you ought to know the fundamental laws

Even though you are extremely right…

His arm shook weakly due to the heavy weight.

If it was an ordinary person, he could memorize the laws little by little on top of living his everyday life, but he had to memorize all at once.

As for later, I’ll have you remember the imperial household law as supplement

– It’s a lie right?

A maid doesn’t lie

I earnestly wished you would say that

Feeling the imminent threat approaching, Lectival relaxed his exhausted body.

Then let us begin

Yes…

Lectival held a pen with his right hand and a note book with his left.

How much more of this ill harassment could he resist, though all these acts seemed to be due to that noble’s daughter’s kindness?

If that’s the case, resisting would contradict his conscience. The only way was to endure silently.

Then, from the impression of each trivial law

Yes, if you would…

Weeping in his heart, he faced the white note book.

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White dragon duke Carl von Lindovorum.

As a duke, a high noble who had yet to give up on the imperial family.

His only expectation was the public peace of the country.

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Hearing that her father who went to a trading company in the town <Kuriado> on the opposite shore of the water spirit lake had returned from the butler managing the entire castle, Meriela became flustered and in her place, her dress had to be prepared by her accompanying maid, Vilia.

Hair, skin, clothes, all check

Once she was contented with affirming her appearance using a full-length mirror, she rushed out of the room to greet her father who had just entered the castle. Though she noticed the maid chased panicky after her later, she could not suppress the whirling feelings within her.

At the foyer was a man in his prime exceeding two meters tall taking out his overcoat. Dressed in noble traditional chief clothing, he headed in the direction where the sounds of hurried footsteps could be heard from. And upon seeing his

daughter running up to him with her ‘paler than his’ silver hair swaying, he hurriedly entrusted his hand luggage to the butler and spread out his large hands.

Come Meriela, my cute daughter !

His expression collapsed without a shred of majesty, with a face full of smile which cannot be appropriately described by words. His butler who followed him till <Kuriado> thought so, and once again believed that this must be how a doting parent looked like.

However the daughter abruptly decelerated upon seeing her father’s enchanted expression. She firmly stopped before plunging into the large spread out arms.

When the daughter came to a complete halt, the butler witnessed the flawless smile of the high-stature man froze over.

–Meriela…

The butler thought he was weeping beneath the frozen smile.

But the daughter did not seem to have an ounce of sympathy towards her father’s appearance. It was most likely to convey business when she faintly opened her drawn lips.

It was a steady stretched out tone.

Father, it’s about the matter mentioned earlier

Mu…

Towards his daughter’s words and expression, he let down his extended arms.

As per Meriela’s words from earlier, this man was her father as well as lord of the castle, the second generation of the white dragon, Duke Carl von Lindovurum. With the exception of anything related to his daughter, he held an appropriate appearance and dignity worthy as the head of the empire nobles.

He placed his hand on his chin and thought for a while, then narrowed his golden eyes and lowered down to speak to his daughter.

–Honestly speaking, it’s difficult to believe that story out of nowhere

But…!

Meriela snapped at Carl’s words.

But without yielding his view, Carl’s expression suddenly slackened when he saw tears welling up in his daughter’s eyes. Then he continued in a gentle voice totally different from a while back.

This appearance and solemnity were undoubtedly not a form of strictness.

This time however, I believe my daughter to have misjudge an important matter. I’ll listen to details in the room.

Ye, yes!

His daughter cheerfully changed into a blossoming expression suddenly.

The father smiled at his daughter’s appearance and led her upwards to his office in the upper floors of the castle.

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Both the parent and child had the same thought – to make this country peaceful.

However, there was a large difference in their means to accomplish that objective.

Carl was plotting to turn in the <White> under his daughter’s care to the alliance army to end the war, while Meriela wanted the <White> to ascend to a suitable status in order to reorganize the country.

Dispatching goods to the alliance army in the rear, and interfering with the origin noble army to keep the collapse of the front-line in check, Carl had the alliance army’s actual condition and the origin noble army’s present status within his grasp.

If the morale of the alliance army was to plummet, it would be difficult to maintain their discipline.

And the Origin Nobles army would not remain idle with such behaviour.

If given a chance, the capital might end up in a sea of flames, hence Carl with this knowledge, made a determined cold-hearted decision.

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In reality, there was no such conclusion where everyone ended up laughing. In that case, for the people who were crying, selecting the best method among the few was the role of the person governing politics. Carl always said that to his successor, Meriela's older brother, and her.

However, she did not agree with her father's words.

She was fastidious, a characteristic of the young people.

Chi, Chichiue's words is extremely plausible… But, the <White> – Lectival do not intend to do us any harm…! Handing out punishment to crimes, and granting pardon for punishment, isn't that the responsibility of the statesman?

My daughter, if I dare say, as of now, to be here now at this time is a crime. Even I would not resort to killing the <white> if the situation was slightly better. Rather, to have him accept the retainer's gratitude as the next emperor, and have a sound upbringing. But it's too late for such situation.

From the secret conversation with the Confederation's envoy in <Kuriado>, if the stalemate continued as it is, new troops would be dispatched to extricate the alliance army trapped at the capital.

This time, the talk was temporarily settled by promising to commission merchants with close association to the duke to deliver goods to the alliance army at the capital. However such method shouldn't be used continually.

Carl informed his daughter that the longest limit was one month.

But in that case, this is unfair to Lectival! It's as if I saved him for him to be killed isn't it?

Without your help, the <White> would have died. In that case, as compensation for prolonging his life, ought he not to become the cornerstone of

the Empire?

Chichiue!!

His daughter slammed the table top with her hands and stood up.

She cried out with a tearful voice.

There’s no reason for him to become one! He is neither a royalty nor a noble nor a commoner of the empire, much less having a reason to be judged by anyone nor did he sinned, why is it right for his life to be snatched away?!

It isn’t right but rather necessary

The world doesn’t revolve only on righteousness. It revolved on errors and irrationality too.

As a statesman, Carl discarded any anguish he felt in regards to his enraged daughter’s crying voice. Politics wasn’t about the process being correct or wrong. Consequently, the result is correct if it’s a good outcome to the majority, and if it isn’t so, it’ll just be a mistake.

Kuu! Are you saying that he has to be sacrificed no matter what?

I would not do so if there were other means. I could have the <White> taken away when you weren’t aware, and everything will have ended by the time you realize and cry.

Being resented and hated were part of his role.

It was his love as a father to accept them.

-Ku!

Feeling helpless, she could only glare at the overwhelming-like existence that was her father in front of her.

Presently, she wasn’t able to do anything besides that.

Her father was about to kill the kind young man who had grasped his own hands and affirmed his own suffering. Yet before her father, she could only do so much

to an extent.

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Meriela wasn’t able to overturn Carl’s thoughts.

It was her role as a nobility to make it this far relying on her heart. If she was to fulfil it, rather than making use of Lectival, there wasn’t any choice but to save the country using his life.

It was at that time that she first felt the burden of being anoble.

Nobles weren’t about position or court rank but the way of living.

Knowing that, she was beneath Lectival.

If she was to request for his death as a noble, she must bear compensation as a noble.

Even if it meant throwing away her body…

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In the room without a clock, he wasn’t able to tell for how long the painful silence had continued, but considering the fact that Vilia who would bring his dinner had yet to appear, not much time should have gone by.

Lectival was reading the simplified version of the thick empire law book and before he noticed, Meriela was gazing at him. Being looked at by Lectival, she calmed down her disoriented heart.

–

Nevertheless, she did not reveal her reason for visiting his room, only looking at him in silence.

Lectival was aware of her appearance but couldn’t find anything in particular to say. In his case, there wasn’t a chance to simply talk to people much less a reason, but it might be the right time to do so now.

Finally deciding her resolve, she broke the silence.

–There’s an opinion of surrendering you to the alliance

Silence descended once again.

Facing towards Lectival, Meriela stiffened her body to brace herself for resentful words but the words which she imagined never came no matter how much time passed.

Unable to comprehend, Meriela lifted her face and in front of her, Lectival’s expression remained unchanged.

–Hou

Lectival was quiet when being informed of his death, and after giving a response, he fell back into silence. His face was fixated on the large law book throughout the time.

It was eerily quiet. Meriela, spurred on by a compelling notion to say something, continued in a trembling voice.

After a limit of one month has pass, you will be extradited to the alliance countries as a war criminal. You will probably be put on trial by both the empire and the alliance countries…

That’ll be troubling

As expected, Lectival did not raise his face. Meriela thought that she rather be spoken ill of from the bottom of her heart, but she wasn’t able to convey them into words. With just a time frame of one month, it was unthinkable to request anything from him.

Ee, really

It wasn’t like Lectival was unperturbed, but rather it felt too unrealistic, hence the lack of reaction.

Having died once and yet being told to die again, he wasn’t sure just what kind of reaction he should have.

Unsure of how to interpret his silence, Meriela hid her face, clasped both hands

tightly and continued her talk in tears. She didn’t want to keep quiet, if she did — she couldn’t speak words of significance.

No matter how much the crime is to be lightly estimated, only the way of dying will change. The only difference is whether you die while holding onto your honour or die while deprive of it.

Is that so?

Up to here, Lectival finally shut the huge law book and changed his view to outside of the window.

After hearing her words, the centre of his heart grew cold like ice.

An overwhelming nothingness dominated his mind instead of fear.

This was his second experience.

This scenery too, it was a short experience

–Gomennasai, gomennasai

He felt she only kept on apologizing.

She continued apologizing without looking his way, refusing to show her face, and in a way, he felt it was painful.

It’s also one of the way to end things, it isn’t your responsibility

But…if only I didn’t do unnecessary things…

In that case, I’d had die long before, won’t the conclusion still be the same?

She wanted to cry out that he was wrong.

Even if she had found him, it’d had been fine to release him before her father return. It’d been fine to contact the temple for their protection. There were many methods yet to not have done so, was it because she misread the situation of uneasiness, or possibly she might have a strong attachment to the <white>.

But, but really…

Please stop crying

Being told that, Meriela hurriedly wiped away her tears.

Since Lectival did not show his shaken appearance, she shouldn’t either.

In front of her was the ideal image of a noble calmly accepting death yet she felt afraid seeing it up close.

She did unnecessary things and burdened herself with all these excessive things; she was surely tied and condemned by this reality. Nonetheless, Lectival wasn’t as composed as she thought.

(It’s the end here too?)

It was slightly regrettable to end without knowing why he was here, but for him who was aware of having died once, death wasn’t an object of fear. Perhaps he might not understand the thing called death, but he was surprised at his insensitivity to death.

It wasn’t because of his pride or readiness due to adopting a calm attitude but rather because he did not have any attachment towards this world and displayed the excellence of abandoning his nature. To begin with, if he had pride and readiness, he would have led a better life in his former world.

I’ll provide you with assistance to my utmost limit within this one month. If you have any wish, my house and I will fulfil them to the best of our abilities. Though you may not think of permitting this, what else can I do…?

Meriela offered herself and became quiet, thus finishing her sentence.

Without such resolution, she wouldn’t be able to converse a single word with Lectival due to her guilt, and above all, her pride wouldn’t allow it.

If her brother succeed the duke as planned, she who was originally a tool of politics, will have to become someone else partner. Meriela thought it wasn’t treated as problem since he will be sacrificed as a tool of the government to save the empire.

Meriela who was opposing the like of her father failed to notice a fact. Even if

her father’s behaviour was naturally the role of a noble, she likely wanted to push it onto someone else.

Hence the reason for those words but Lectival declined.

That…to me is an invalid proposal. I’m just wasting this life which you save, yet to seek compensation for it is unthinkable

A pale pretty face, silver hair and golden eyes.

And with a symmetrical physique, it had a deadly attraction as an opposite sex, but since he understood that she was requesting for the sake of atonement, he didn’t wish for more. Because he knew that the day when she’ll feel regret will come someday after he was gone.

Even if she doesn’t regret, there was a line he couldn’t yield as a man. And above all else, she wasn’t a woman who was fine with dishonouring a man like him, Lectival smiled in self-mockery.

On the other hand, since it was before his death, perhaps he might make a request of the unseemly her. Such thought definitely dwell within him but he ignored it assertively. He still had a little self-respect.

Rather than escaping to atonement like now, I want to be able to accept from the bottom of my heart to entrust myself to the other party someday. At least I’ll be happy in that way.[3]

It was unpleasant to see his benefactor being sad.

Though it was a short encounter, he wanted her to be happy.

Meriela was that important as an acquaintance for Lectival to wish so.

It wasn’t due to his sense of righteousness; he just didn’t want to think of himself being reluctant.

Whether there was a romantic feeling or not, he wasn’t able to deny nor affirm it. He felt this talk would end if he let it fade away as it is.

Expectations, he knew how fortunate it was to have expectation of…

He felt he was being effeminate. When he could not meet up to people’s expectations, he would lay the blame on others.

Despite being that kind of person, there was something even he couldn’t yield.

He had nothing but merely two definite memories within him.

This lovely fragile lady and the strong minded maid.

Only these two certainly existed in his world. If it was to this extent, wouldn’t it be fine to let him protect them?

–Should I thank you?

Meriela who was looking downwards finally raised her face. She looked at Lectival with upturned eyes while smiling softly and tilted her head. It was obvious at a glance that she was pushing herself. Lectival couldn’t leave Meriela as she was and reached out for her silver hair shining like the moonlight.

He stroked her hair while replying to her question.

If it can make you happy, wouldn’t just a thank you be fine?

The silky silver hair made Lectival feel extremely comfortable. He wanted to keep on touching it if possible.

But he shook off such temptation and withdrew his hands. Though Meriela’s expression was slightly clouded with regret, he arbitrarily decided it was his imagination. If not, he might think of things beyond his means/position.

In the place where I was before, there’s seldom things such as a meaningful death. In spite of that, to be given a huge meaning like saving this country, can you say this is good luck?

Being told such, he shouted out in his heart. In reality, this country was inconsequential.

However if it was to protect the most important person to him, isn’t it worth to sacrifice this life which has not found much meaning?

Similar to that empty world, rather than being given just a desultory death, wasn't he somewhat like a 'Messiah'?

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Since he wasn't able to actually experience life, he wasn't afraid of death.

Was it an abnormality or common sense of living things?

Lectival who didn't display his fearful behaviour of death overlapped with Meriela's ideal image of a noble.

Without realizing Meriela's innermost thoughts, Lectival went along with one of her wishes.

That was an important reason for him to live in this world, even if it was an awfully short life.

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If it was such a thing, the regretful silver-haired daughter of noble birth who ought to have heard various things in her present military school, felt the severe impact of Lectival's words. Moments before, she was requested to tell him her name[4].

–Name? Eh, my name?

Yes, please tell me your name. As expected, to die without knowing the name of my benefactor feels unpleasant.

W…what…

*Gakuri* Meriela's figure crumbled, causing Lectival to tilt his neck. If he knew the details of the unfolding conflict within her, his attitude might somewhat change, though not for the better.

For now, assessing him to be such a man would only make her feel depressed.

It was worth it to risk his own life for her, and indisputably unfavourable to think of such a woman as shameless.

Then, will you tell me?

Of, of course! Rather, I should apologize for not introducing myself until now.

Ie, I heard you're a remarkable person from Vilia-san but is it natural to not give your name or …

It was in human nature to know names.

At the very least, among the population of the white dragon duchy, those who didn't know of her name might be the little children and people that came from other territories. Now that Lectival thought about it, he didn't assertively ask for her name.

Isn't it rude to ask, he thought.

What kind of ill-mannered person do you think I am, to get angry for asking my name? Maa, I might as well do a proper self-introduction.

With elegant movements which were rigidly taught to her ingrained into her body, Meriela stood before Lectival. With silvery hair flowing and clothes dancing (), Lectival's sight was stolen by that spectacle.

<Arutodesutenia Empire> Duke, Carl von Lindovurum's eldest daughter, Meriela Lily Lindovurum. Hereafter, pleased to be your acquaintance.

Exhibiting a flawless princess-like behaviour and gently lowering her head — Meriela Lily Lindovorum.

The princesses of the dukes named "Empire's Four Dragon Princesses," there was a woman among them called the war goddess due to her respectable figure on the battlefield.

–Will this do?

*Kuku* Lectival laughed at the sight of her looking up at him with her small tongue sticking out while lowering her head.

Correcting his dignity, he returned a self-introduction.

I’m extremely delighted to have a courteous self-introduction. My name is Lectival. I’ve nothing to my name but it’s certainly a great blessing from heavens to know of your name. Please treat me well from hereafter.

It’s the same for me, I’m happy to have my name remembered by the one who will become the empire’s hero.

Saying so, both of them laughed together.

Such a scene could only be seen as fellow friends merely joking together.

Whether this was happiness or not, it was a separate matter—

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An opponent who didn’t need exaggerated title.

She faced such an adversary for the first time.

That was the beginning of her fate, as well as the start of an unforgettable battle in their lifetime.

Year 2009 of the empire.

It was the time of the year when autumn drew close.

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Using his own title as the White Dragon, he dispatched a letter to an important commander of the Origin Nobles army and for a brief period, analysed the empire’s situation within his mind while keeping his eyes closed.

Originally, the national armed forces, which ought to be defending the empire’s territory, had their movement restricted due to political disorder. Furthermore, part of the nobles who should have received stipend as feudal lords of the country aided the confusion, resulting in the reality where foreign troops invaded till the tip of the empire’s nose.

Certainly, if the empire’s entire army of the <Arutodesunia> national armed forces attacked the foreign army which is before the capital, they won’t lose so it

was hard to say that the empire itself would suffer a military defeat. Though the pro-emperor nobles' army were definitely one-sidedly demolished by the alliance army, the military might of the whole empire's troops was only a small armed force which in comparison, wasn't even 10% of the nobles-cum-traitors' troops. (Quality>Quantity)

Moreover, there were farmers who were forcibly conscripted from the supporting nobles' territories and mercenaries employed with gold in their main force.

The empire' troops were largely composed of professional soldiers who received special training and were zealous in everyday practice, hence even if their number was the same, there should be a distinct different in combat ability.

There were certainly numerous people with skills among the mercenaries, but there were also some foreigner units made up of mercenaries tied with long-term contracts within the empire's troops. Their abilities were highly evaluated by the empire army, and the treatment given to them weren't much different to empire soldiers of similar rank.

However, no matter how powerful they were, fighting shoulder to shoulder against farmers who until recently were just holding hoes and ploughing the fields, it was difficult to bring out their full strength. On the contrary, it was easy to guess that the morale would drop when assigned with allies whom they were unable to trust.

In short, the supporting nobles' army only gathered the number to save its own prestige, yet anyone could see that they committed an obvious blunder. If it was someone who received a formal high grade officer training in the army or a noble who always have his private army on standby, such mistake would never be committed.

–Foolish lot.

Truly incorrigible.

Carl retrieved a distilled alcohol and glass cup from his work desk's drawer, but he recalled his daughter severely telling him to stop drinking during work and snorted his nose in displeasure.  Being told that she would never call himfatheragain if he broke the promise, the doting Carl could only abide.

Kuso

While conscious of his outburst of anger, he directed his irritation towards the fools who were secluding themselves inside the capital. Until now, it was spoken aristocratically (as a Duke) but as a noble race (White dragon clan), Carl disliked pursuing an average ideal excessively[5]. He thought that submitting to a supreme authority was a heavy responsibility which he had to accomplish no matter what.

Exposing such crisis in the 2000 years of empire's history, it was unbecoming of the nobles who protect the citizens and the country. Even if the empire survives the war, there is no benefit. In that case, preferably — at this moment, he had already decided on how to deal with the supporting nobles.

From the letter that arrived to him recently, it was easily understood that the three Dukes, who had given up on the empire royal family hence declaring independence, had similar intentions. Though direct notations were avoided to guard against leaks, Carl grasped the real meaning without any problem.

Prior to this, documents deciding the fate of the supporting nobles were sent to the Origin Nobles.

If they were delivered together with letters of similar contents from the three remaining Dukes, the Origin Nobles, setting aside their inner thoughts, might publicly abide their nobles congress leader's decision. That was the extent of the Four Dukes' influence and by maintaining it; they were capable of possessing military power.

The Four Dukes had yet to send out a single soldier for this battle.

In other words, the strongest and most famous of the nobles' troops, the remaining Four Dukes' armies were unhurt.

Carl's army wasn't lacking when challenging the foreign regular army, and if necessary, preparations were arranged to head towards the capital within three days. They were an existence that created a stir in this war.

(But, if there's new reinforcement to the alliance army, the situation will deteriorate and it'll become meaningless to send the Four Dukes' armies including mine.)

At any rate, with the infantry's marching speed, it will take five days to reach the capital from the Four Dukes' territories while the cavalry will need two days.

If it was the dragon clan which lived in the skies, regardless of how slow their flying speed was, they might barely manage to reach the capital in a day but, nonetheless, the dragon Duke's army didn't have that many units. It was too heavy a burden to take on a military force numbering in tens of thousands.

Perhaps the only reassuring fact was that the alliance army reinforcement didn't have a necessary just cause?

With support from its own people, it was possible for the alliance army to invade foreign territories under the strategic objective of subjugating the dictator who plunge their friendly nation into disorder yet with the loss of the target for their objective, it was already impossible to accomplish that goal. In that case, they should logically retreat immediately, but from the primary calculation, the war expenditure incurred by the alliance army during that campaign exceeded 5% of the alliance country's GDP.

The assembly was originally made up of several countries; hence the alliance army composing of the <Arusutoromeria Democratic Confederation> which possessed power of a regional government and neighbouring countries of similar national structure, seemed to be troubled with various war expenditure burdens.

If there were countries which merely pay for the expenses without dispatching any soldiers, there were also countries which send nothing but military volunteers as soldiers.

Thus, the result was disputes due to competing for the same fruit as much as possible.

On top of strengthening the economic relationship between <Arusutoromeria Democratic Confederation> and the Empire, the plan was to receive reparations. However, the reparations known as the compensation to the bereaved family denoted by the Empire weren't entirely sufficient for the alliance army to compensate its war expenditure burdens. In the first place, the reparations for the bereaved families weren't accounted for in the nation's estimate.

Thus it wasn't hard to imagine the <Arusutoromeria Democratic Confederation> which led the invasion being pressured by the various countries that didn't attain

what they originally expected. Carl foresaw signs of alliance army's withdrawal but from the information of an acquaintance in the foreign affairs department, the Confederation governments and military were in conflict about the plans hereafter, thus negotiations were halted.

The Confederation government wanted to draw out concession from the Empire at any costs, whereas the military wanted an early withdrawal before their military force exhausted themselves.

While the government was afraid of the populace's resentment following the economic deterioration due to the war expenditure and turned to self-protection, the army didn't want its soldiers that took large budget and long time to be raised become sacrifices for worthless politics. It could be said to be a confrontation between two such parties.

Even in the Capital, there was dissatisfaction towards the Origin Nobles who did backdoor transactions with the Alliance Army, as well as shouts of condemnation for the Supporting Nobles from radical parties of both the noble and citizen congresses. As of now, the minority faction of the citizen congress was gathering support from each faction and depending on the conditions hereafter, it could become the majority faction but, there were traces of reality that the stand-off might continue as it was. In that case, when the power of state is put into motion, possibilities of an all-out war might have to be taken into consideration.

Under the pretext of the Emperor being the Supreme Commander was absent, the present Imperial Army didn't move its forces when in reality, the upper stratum department was placed in that position by the Emperor. However, from their desperation to protect themselves, Carl knew that they had abdicated command of the imperial whole army that had become their enemy.

But it was a convenient situation when the national armed forces didn't move.

Since the Empire didn't move its regular army in this war, there wasn't a need to prepare unnecessary loan to the countries of the alliance.

It was the nobles' private armies that dealt damage to the alliance army; hence they were the ones to carry out reparations. While the Empire held the responsibility of not restraining them, it could justify itself by claiming to have penalize them. Needless to say, while it was possible to make such claim, it was

unthinkable for the several foreign countries to just accept it. In regards to them, a foolish move of not bearing any responsibility was an action of a ruined country.

(TLN: The Empire had to take some sort of action or face criticism from its neighbours.)

Realistically speaking, it wasn't very practical.

But even so in this war, according to the cross national agreement, it wasn't the case where the alliance army invaded the Empire's domains.

After all, the invasion was carried out in accordance to promise, arbitrarily made by the Origin Nobles who did not possess sovereignty. It wasn't impossible for the Empire to pursue the allied countries for infringement of territories if it wanted to. Yet by pursuing them, the fact of the Origin Nobles' betrayal had to be recognized by the Empire, but nobles aren't the Emperor, there were replacements.

Origin Nobles were reputations and not peerage.

Even if the Origin Nobles' houses were crushed, another noble would appear to succeed them.

However, if the same thing was to pointlessly repeat itself, everything is meaningless.

As I thought,  we as nobles must change.

It was the pride of keeping 2000 years of history intact.

However, old things will someday rot.

'Only by changing while embracing the history can true history be made,' thought Carl.

Fortunately, the three Dukes besides him began holding the same thought. They held political power rivalling to Carl, and just knowing that they weren't seized (, will need a better word…) by evil politicians' custom, the reformation from hereafter can be sped up.

White Dragon Lindovorum.

Black Dragon Nizuheggu.

Red Dragon Suvarogu.

Blue Dragon Leviathan.

As dragon race, they had high amount of pride and shallow attachment to endless power and wealth which humans desired. That was exactly why, as a shield that defended the Empire of the founding Emperor who was their friend and lord, they were bestowed the present territories and status.

The founding Emperor was once among humans, and feared the monster called Greed kept inside the hearts of their short lifespan race.

He appointed the four accompanying dragons as guardians to safeguard the Empire's people whom he believed in and fought together with.

It's inexcusable to the founding Emperor to lose the Empire here.

And to protect the Empire means to infringe on his lord's life[6]. There shouldn't be a mistake in the contract which was staked with and sworn on the reputation and existence of dragon.

No matter how many generations, as long as the Lindovorum of White Dragon's name exists, the contract will continue on.

Carl imposed a vow of protecting the Empire even at the cost of throwing away everything on himself.

And he had such means on his hands. As if guided by fate, the <White> fell into the dragon's den.

Young man of the <White>, it's fine to bear a grudge. When I die and serve at your feet in the realm of the dead, I shall atone for the sins I pushed onto you with my all. But for now, I shall have you become the cornerstone for the Empire.

On the garden's bench seen from Carl's study room, he found people with silver

and white hairs.

He experienced conversing with a friend, who was separated for years, during those distant days. Today, thinking of his daughter having the same experience, he remembered the loneliness as well as the happiness.

Come to think of it, that friend —.

He was laughing similarly to that fellow (Lectival).

Reminiscing about the friend who was no longer on this world but on a trip in a world of someplace, Carl closed his eyes peacefully.

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The time passed slowly.

There was Meriela who had given Lectival a short lease of life, and Vilia who put her mistress’s intents on priority.

Passing everyday with these two, Lectival felt the repose which he had never gotten.

Even if it was the grace period before dying with certainty, it was an irreplaceable time to these three people.

Amusement with board games, strolling in the nearby forest, viewing the autumn harvest.

Although Lectival didn’t show his feelings towards his impending death, Meriela would occasionally reveal a gloomy expression, and such appearance would cause Vilia a tinge of uneasiness.

Struggling beneath the water while looking calm on the surface, the days moved on with each of them holding onto their own feelings.

They held onto that large strain as it was.

End of Chapter 4

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# Chapter 5

Last Edit: 19 July 16.

Part 1

At the scene of Carl who had deep wrinkles etched onto his forehead, the subordinate that came in carrying the report felt his back froze over.

He knew that his lord wasn't like the arrogant dragon depicted in ancient history but nonetheless, his lord's anger was similar to a misfortune for him. The spirit emitted by dragon race was already a poison to ordinary human populace.

–A large echelon of alliance army is amassing at the western national border. Is this not a joke?

Cer, certainly

Such life-risking joke cannot be spoken.

That subordinate wouldn't behave in a way to incur the imperial wrath of the notorious/infamous dragon race.

Its total number exceeds 60000, and furthermore, there's information that each country of the alliance is sending reinforcement in succession. From the information, the main force isn't the alliance but the <Shierumia Republic>, though it isn't evident yet.

Each country's intelligence organisations invested a large amount of effort and budget into counterespionage. Carl didn't think it was that easy to draw out information. Even so, it was due to his prudent personality, which he thought of wanting even a little information.

However, it wasn't characteristic of him to ask for too much. In this place, he gave up obtaining any more information.

–Very well, how's the report on the gathering of Imperial troops in the northern national border?

The southern subjugation army () in the Imperial–it's confirmed that a new invading force is being formed for our country. The documents bearing the Emperor's signature seems to have reached the northern countries. Are they in great unrest?

Fun, we'll send magical beasts and troops. The Imperial's national policy seems troublesome[1]

The successor of the old Arumada Empire () that once ruled this continent made the tundra which spread out in the north of the Empire () into his territory, and proclaimed it as the new Arumada Empire.

While it certainly had the national power to back itself as the Arumada Empire, it fell short of being overwhelming in comparison to the Empire and Confederation. If the Empire and Confederation were to unite, they could get their teeth () into the Imperial's national power.

However, with an abundance of underground resources, and a domestic situation where magic technicians were scarce, development of scientific technology cannot be made light of.

The Imperial's military strength was backed by its amount of soldiers that far outnumbered that of the Empire and Confederation and the performance of its advanced weapons.

However there was a problem; a chronic disease which existed not in other countries but the Imperial.

There was a rule where humans were the superior race since the founding of the country.

Part of the demi-human race was barely treated similarly to humans, but demons, dragons, therianthropes and any other races besides human weren't recognized as citizens. On the contrary, they were declared in the country's official documents as the evil (influence) which caused the old Imperial to collapse. In short, Carl's Empire's people were evil beasts which ought to be destroyed for their country.

This was the reason why entering into a diplomatic relationship with the Imperial wasn't successful until now.

Even so, provoking us strongly to that extent, do those guys think of us as beasts that would remain silent while being subjugated?[2]

Since there was a state of tension with a foreign country, the Empire's northern border defence army was a local garrison comprised of the Empire army's elites. The nobles' army also seemed to be gathering excellent talents hence, there was unlikely any threats inland, and he involuntarily laughed at the difference in experience between the navy which protected the southern marine transport routes and the southern army that acted as the main force[3].

Towards the east, there was nothing but the seas, but as their national border (territorial waters) was adjacent to the <Izumo Land of the Gods Union> () across the sea, a navy of moderate size was assembled to act as its main force.

In any case, the Empire troops in the north couldn't permit the Imperial's invasion. In fact, until now, no matter how many times a battle occurred in the neighbouring border, the territory of the Empire had never been invaded once.

They were probably aiming for the time when the Emperor was absent, but if it was as it is, they would just be intercepted and crushed at the border's vicinity like before.

However, thinking of worst case scenario, increase the amount of information about the north for precaution sake

Ha

Sending off the subordinate who had lowered his head and withdrew, Carl leaned his back against the chair and closed his eyes.

The state of affairs surrounding the Empire was still unpredictable, but if the young man of the <White> was to be handed over to the alliance, most of the problem would be resolved. He might have spare time until the enthronement of a new Emperor, but if he could expel the domestic troubles, it is possible to earn at least that much time.

(—It's about time to give my greetings to that young man…)

Until now, Carl deliberately avoided contact with the <White> in consideration of his daughter's feelings, but from the standpoint of forcing death upon him, he

cannot afford not to meet him. For a White Dragon Duke to be thought as one without etiquette until he dies, that itself is a disgrace of a court noble.

It wouldn’t be bad to hear about his final wish too.

Perhaps his daughter had already fulfilled some of his wishes, but there might be some, whilst impossible for his daughter, that he could do.

There’s also the hand of building a proxy imperial court within the castle () — while thinking such, Carl sank into a seas of thoughts. (TN: I’m guessing he meant shifting the capital from Exceed to his territory)

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Thus, two days later.

The White Dragon palace received a shock.

A cavalry of unknown background had raided the alliance army encampment

The Allied Forces had deemed it to be an attack from the Empire and commenced counterattack on the Origin Nobles army.

While Carl was in the midst of performing his duties, he heard that news from his subordinate who came running in hurriedly.

For a brief moment, he endured the shock but immediately issued instructions to some subordinates. He then headed towards the room of the <White> young man.

There was only one remaining method for him to take now.

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21st day, 2nd month of Black, the summit meeting of the Origin Nobles army was in disorder.

As far as anyone can see, it was obvious that a company of their army and a suitable () cavalry unit launched a pre-emptive strike on the alliance army.

With the alliance army’s tension rising at once, it was no wonder that they began

attacking the capital and the Origin Nobles army during this time. Iya, there was also news that part of the forces had already commenced attack on the Origin Nobles army in self-defence.

By barely suppressing its own army's counterattack, the Origin Nobles army prevent the situation from turning into a quagmire.

Seeing such reality, where did that unit belonged to and who's the commanding officer, everything was thrown out during the nobles' meeting by the attendees who were raising angry voices.

As they were gathered in a tent which was the Origin Nobles' HQ, it was quite a boisterous place.

Have we yet to find out where they belonged to?! The envoy from the alliance army had already come several times requesting for explanation and apology for the situation, as well as extradition of the suspects! If the alliance army was to change from the now sporadic attacks to a full frontal assault, we mustn't be taken down in silence

Among the nobles sitting at the head desk in the tent, the man sitting at the chief seat stood up and bellowed.

Within the various prominent leaders of the Origin Nobles army was Erubenhaito's <> Margrave who excelled the most in the art of war, Mitsudogarudo-kou < >, Aruberehito von Vivuru <>.

With short copper hair characteristic of the giant race, an angular face to his bear-like body, thick beard and eyebrows mingled with white hair, rather than being one of the Empire's Origin Nobles as Mitsudogarudo-kou, people might even be convinced if he was called as the bandit chief that appeared within the Empire's mountainous areas.

Born as the second son to a low grade noble who didn't had any territory, he sought apprenticeship at the Empire army at the age of 15, and thereafter, served out (of his apprenticeship) as its commander for 200 years. Even though long lives species account for the majority in the Empire, those who possess 200 years of experience are almost non-existence. The army's retirement age is aligned to races with short lifespan so looking on the whole; there are few people like him who did over 100 years of service.

Moreover, during that period of 200 years, most of the time was spent on the battlefield.

He often piled up distinguished military services in the battlefield; was bestowed with the discontinued house name of Vivuru, and received the honour of being granted with first-hand words from the Emperor of that time many times. In a way, perhaps it was a matter of course for him to be part of the Origin Nobles with such merits.

He was now equipped with a great sword, a reward bestowed by the Emperor. Perhaps his present social status came from the valour of wielding that sword, which was originally meant to decorate his residence as a family heirloom, on the battlefield.

He was the most knowledgeable about military affairs in this place, and it wasn't a mistake to say that he was one of the many who managed the Origin Nobles army.

–How many times do I've to say this, Marquis Mitsudogarudo, we're still in the midst of investigating. At the very least, the cavalry unit which supposedly commenced attack during that time doesn't exist on official papers. And didn't they lead magicians? There shouldn't be a unit comprising of cavalry and magic in our army

A blonde hair female commander who sat in front of Marquis Mitsudogarudo informed him so, while keeping her arms crossed.

She had a slender body with fairy-like pigment, and though her blond hair lost its radiance due to being cropped until the top of her shoulders, the faint hue gave her a militaristic appearance.

Astoria-kou (), Viscount Tachiana Riato Fuin Haruze ()

Bearing the name of the Origin Nobles Astoria, she was the kouhai of the present Black Dragon Duke and once served in the Empire's intelligence department.

She had a respectable career in the intelligence department which was tasked with the management of information within and outside of the country. And upon retirement, she succeeded her deceased husband's Haruze Viscount House,

where she then carried out the administration of the territory. Yet after a short while, she was requested to become part of the Emperor’s personal advisory committee.

Immediately after, due to the outbreak of a large-scale dispute with the Imperial, she was dispatched as a peace talk envoy. On top of successfully rescuing all prisoners of war with exceptional negotiation skills, she fulfilled the exploit ( ) of lowering her head in apology to the envoy of Imperial that undertook the negotiation.

At that time, she had used merely several pieces of documents during the negotiation; hence it wasn’t an exaggeration to say her ability was the best in the continent, much less the Empire.

While the contents of the documents weren’t clear, it was said that she obtained Imperial’s confidential information via personal connections.

In reality, the ones who knew the contents were herself and a male confident, and thereafter only the preceding Emperor had received the report from her.

Astoria-dono…I know that but…!

Then devote your ability to break the deadlock in this situation. I’ll bear the responsibility of ascertaining what you want to know. — Are you still dissatisfied?

Astoria-kou replied with harsh indifference to Mitsudogarudo-kou’s groan. Nevertheless, they had a long association as fellow Origin Nobles; hence he didn’t bear any animosity towards her.

By socializing with Astoria-kou for a while, it could be understood that her manner of speaking was similar to the general populace (). With the exception of official places, her tone was the same even in the presence of the Emperor. This was something he knew by hearing it personally from the previous Emperor.

And he knew Astoria-kou’s love for the Empire wasn’t any different from his.

–Understood. I’ll believe in Astoria-dono’s words

You’ve my gratitude

Astoria-kou lowered her small eyes to express her thanks.

While showing a bitter smile towards the attitude of such colleague, Mitsudogarudo-kou *dokkari* sat down on his seat.

The investigation of the unit in question will be entrusted to Astoria-kou and her subordinates, and I’d like to get approval as a whole for our objectives hereafter

As of now, the alliance army demanded an apology and the handing over of suspects from the Origin Nobles army. In the case where their demands weren’t met, on top of linking up with their country, they’d proclaim a declaration of war on the Empire.

The Origin Nobles had received news that the alliance army’s reinforcement had already crossed the western national border. Approximately 60000 in numbers; taking into consideration of the troops remaining in the north against the Imperial, this amount was equivalent to half of the alliance army’s war potential for foreign campaign.

The various countries that had yet to dispatch troops to fulfil the obligation to Empire which was a friendly nation also raised voices of criticism in response to the Origin Nobles army’s attack on the alliance army. At this rate, if the Empire cannot take effective measures, these countries too, might advance their troops into the Empire.

If it was the Empire of the past, hostility from such a small country might not be forgiven. However, it could be said that the present Empire doesn’t have any spare power to go against the alliance army. The country was divided; rebels were occupying the capital; furthermore, the nation was advocating an autocracy system while there wasn’t a king which acts as a symbol. In general, this could be explained as the reason why the prominent major powers on the continent make light of the Empire until now.

However, for the small country that received treatment equivalent to a vassal state of the Empire, there was another reason for it to bare its fangs at the suzerain state.

With the larger countries holding their grounds in this continent, the small countries had to come under their patronage to sustain their own. The question wasn't about which country it is, but rather whether it has the power to protect them in exchange for being ruled over.

And thus the Empire was breaking away from these conditions.

Due to the effect of the deterioration of internal public order, accompanied by the slowing down of economics activities, and the absence of both military power and the Emperor which are symbols of a nation's strength, the country became divided. Moreover, with the disaster of receiving aggression from other major powers as an impetus, there's a possibility that the Empire itself would be lost. In such situation, to shout loudly support for Empire etc. was a suicidal act[4].

Hence, it wasn't strange to consider discarding the current sense of obligation and accept a new suzerain.

Since such conduct would somewhat drew criticism between nations, it was indisputably not an act that had to be taken. As it is, the Empire would disappear, and if the Confederation and Imperial were to expand, only destruction awaits them.

<Maiya Grand Duchy> (), <Buraddore Duchy> (), Liberal City <Ruruie> these countries had already dispatched troops towards our Empire. <Zakusen> and <Arumaia> too had finished convening their troops. We're short of time but in this situation where we're unable to secure the suspect, the extradition is impossible. Since the facts of this case is unclear, apology is inadvisable

To begin with, there's the possibility that the Empire performing an attack was a deception. Whether the wire-puller was the alliance, Imperial or some other country, by using this matter, the Empire's top could come under pressure.

In that case, it'll be the closure for the Empire's history.

This concerns the Empire's existence. Isn't that so, Eimerushia-kou…!

Mitsudogarudo-kou glared at a single old man seated mid-way of the long desk in quiet fury.

Following his line of sight, the attendees directed their eyes to the old man named Eimerushia-kou.

–Seems to be so

The old man nodded calmly.

With most of his hair being bluish-white, it indicated the old man accumulated life. The appearance when becoming old wasn't any different whether it was the short-life humans or other long-life races; only the process differed.

He was Eigen border official, Eimerushia-kou, Haegeru tsuu Ritsutenhaimu.

He was the last Origin Noble in this place, and the cause of this time alliance army's invasion.

Everyone here knows about your transactions with the alliance army as well as you being the one who invited them into the Empire. The four Dragon Dukes probably knew about this too

–Naturally

Though he received hatred-like ill will that was directed towards him from the surrounding, Eimerushia-kou's complexion remained unchanged. He had surpassed the old age of seventy years, and was a man who dedicated most of his life in the Empire's government. Hostility of this degree was like a gentle breeze.

Then what should we do!? His Majesty, the Emperor, had passed away yet the alliance army continue to remain, inviting the Empire's crisis. That's a heavy responsibility…!?

Eimerushia-kou was like a comrade in arms to Mitsudogarudo-kou.

They should have been friends who supported the Empire together.

For this reason, this matter felt like an inexcusable betrayal to him.

Even now, Mitsudogarudo-kou still believed that Eimerushia-kou wouldn't sell out the Empire. However with the fact that the Empire was now in a crisis, Eimerushia-kou's responsibility was grievous.

You wanted to say it must be settled with this life right?

Eimerushia-kou understood what Mitsudogarudo-kou wanted to say.

However, the problem would normally be solved with one's life. But everything was thrown in chaos by the death of the fake Emperor who tormented the Empire's people. Furthermore, to bring forth disaster onto the Empire even after dying — he was seething with anger towards the Emperor within the depth of his heart.

He understood it was unjustified resentment through misunderstanding. If his remaining short lifespan can make up for the Empire's future, he wouldn't deny his responsibility for transacting with the allied countries.

However the problem was no longer about Eimerushia-kou's life.

If it was possible, you might have already done so. You being here means that you've already ran out of means to resolve this disturbances. Am I wrong?

Astoria-kou who remained quiet until now, asked with her eyes closed.

Indeed. If that's the case, to offer this life as the country's cornerstone after the battle, I wish to be allowed to fight alongside with you

If that's your way of picking up responsibility, very well. That's my opinion, how about the rest?

The nobles seated at the long table gave their quiet consent towards Astoria's question.

This responsibility was unavoidable, even so, if the merits that Eimerushia-kou had done until now were to be taken into account, they might allow it in recognition as a last duty for the Empire, or so the attendees thought.

With shaking eyelids, Eimerushia-kou bowed deeply to his comrades' silent forgiveness. When his face resurfaced, he looked over the various commanders seated in a row with a sharp glint in his eyes.

Perhaps that greatest mistake was because I didn't trust you who're the allies of the Empire. If I had believed in you and taken care to expostulate with the

Emperor, the current problem wouldn’t have arisen. It isn’t an exaggeration to say that the situation is already at its worst. Nonetheless, you who have gathered here, do you’ve the resolution to sacrifice your lives for the Empire’s sake?

That’s redundant to ask. I’ve dedicated this body for the country’s sake since the previous Emperor’s reign. As if I’ll turn my back on this national crisis

As expected, Mitsudogarudo-kou replied to Eimerushia-kou’s speech.

Standing up with their chests straightened, the nobles gathered in the tent shouted out their determination in voices like a cracked bell.

Being dragged along by the flow, voices of agreement from the attendees rose, and the last remaining Astoria-kou unfolded her arms leisurely. Slowly standing up, her once closed long-slit eyes shone sharply and she raised her voice.

–Your determination haven certainly been heard. If so, I’d like to consolidate your views on the objective hereafter, will that be fine?

Voices of consent came in succession.

Nodding in satisfaction at those voices, she exchanged glance with Mitsudogarudo-kou and began the talk with her thoughts on the objective.

Firstly, to avoid any further false accusation, they’ll go on the defensive against the alliance army’ attack.

Secondly, to perform an extensive elimination of the unit that was the root of this time problem in the entire nobles’ armies.

The third was to suppress the revolting nobles who were holed up in the capital as rebels.

The attendees accepted the three suggestions brought up as the biggest objectives.

In particular the third clause of their objectives, that battle was a problem within the Empire and was essentially emphasized.

The fact that whether the Origin Nobles army commenced attack on the alliance

army was still unclear at this point of time. Even so the alliance army's reinforcement had crossed over the national border and this was publicized to ensure the safety of the friendly troops garrisoned within the Empire and the Empire's citizens.

If an armed group of unknown background was to rampage, it would become the reason for the advancement.

As a matter of fact, to arrive at such reasoning was due to the Empire's regular army falling into dysfunction. If the regular army's function could be recovered, there'd be no reason to recognize the stationing of the alliance army, hence it should be possible to request for the withdrawal of their troops.

However the Empire army wouldn't move regardless of the Origin Nobles' appeals.

This was because in addition to the absence of the Emperor who originally should be the supreme commander of the Empire army, the high command organisation of the whole army obstinately refused to move the Empire army.

If the Empire army moved and the alliance army retreated, the traitorous pro-nobles and their collaborators would be dragged to court and be judged by the Origin Nobles and the formerly replaced military upper echelons. It was enough to be considered as felony just by not moving the Empire army until now, at the very least, unless their own safety was guaranteed, the present military upper echelons wouldn't move the army.

It was uncertain what the previous deceased Emperor was thinking when entrusting the army to them, at the very least it didn't seem to be the ability of fulfilling the army's original role.

The scar given to the country by merely one man was probably deeper than they imagined — though the three Origin Nobles similarly thought so, they couldn't come up with a solution conclusively.

Besides reorganizing each unit and dealing with soldiers' unrest, they had to decide on punishments in regards to comrades' insubordination such as taking advantage of the disorder and flouting military regulations. Those gathered here without a doubt, understood that the entire Origin Nobles army was in disarray.

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While the Origin Nobles army was withstanding the alliance army's fierce onslaught, the situation began to change greatly.

Within the maelstroms of tragedies, a single man found himself on the history's centre stage.

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Hearing the door-knock, Lectival and Meriela looked at each other.

Vilia who was standing beside the door looked surprisingly towards it; hence it could be easily guessed from the spectacle that it was strange for guests to visit this room.

However, they couldn't keep the visitor on the other side of the door waiting.

Seeing Lectival's nod, Meriela informed with a please.

Receiving those words, Vilia opened the door and bowed hurriedly upon seeing the person.

Chichiue…!

Meriela too expressed a voice of surprise and stood up once she realized the visitor's identity. The chair which she was sitting on fell with a clatter.

Not once had her father visited this room. She had always pondered about her father's manner of showing treatment to Lectival as a sacrifice.

And Lectival similarly thought so too.

The White Dragon Duke never dealt with him personally. Giving Lectival a comfortable life was the minimum courtesy Carl could do for someone that was about to die solely for their Empire's sake.

Lectival had some knowledge of the reason for the White Dragon Duke's visit.

The time had come for him to fulfil his only role in this world.

Lectival turned towards Meriela who knocked over the chair in surprise and got off the bed slowly before standing up.

Meriela hurriedly stopped those movements. Carl also knew he was still recuperating. Even if it was someone else, it wouldn't come off as being impolite for an acquainted patient to reply from the bed during the visit.

However, Lectival shook his head and whispered in a voice audible only to Meriela.

–I'm a man, and he's someone whom I should put on an appearance for anytime

This is also part of the promise to protect you — Meriela's face warped at Lectival's self-derisive tone and lent her shoulder to him. Lectival thanked her, but she stared at her father without replying.

She was declaring that she intended to do what she could do, causing her father's eyebrows to twitch.

Lectival stood straight in front of the great man and slowly bowed his head.

–This's our first time meeting, I'm Lectival and was rescued by your daughter. Would you be the White Dragon Duke, Carl von Lindovorum?

You stand correct. I'm Carl, Lindovorum Duke

Carl didn't adopt behaviour of despising ordinary humans.

However that was all that was to it.

When humans were with dragons, they couldn't stop trembling due to the difference of overwhelming presence.

That might be instinctive fear. In the olden days even before the old Imperial era, at the time when dragons bear hostility towards humans, they were treated as existences similar to gods.

They killed on a whim.

And tens of thousands of human troops were trampled by merely one dragon.

However, Lectival didn’t have that kind of fear with historical background.

Yet nonetheless, he understood instinctively the difference in status as a living thing.

His instinct as a living thing appealed to him that this was an existence which wouldn’t be good to go against.

–Ku

Soaking in sweat, a pain ran through his eyes.

In the midst of pain, Lectival realized he couldn’t lift his face before Carl.

And Carl didn’t pay any attention towards Lectival’s behaviour.

(Does he mean to say it’s insignificant…?)

Certainly, it might be thought so if his current attitude was seen.

Didn’t he suppress his mind to not escape his imminent death? — He remembered so while his thoughts were barely in order.

And he wondered if he wasn’t greatly off the mark[5].

(This person probably wanted to say my only value was to die…)

There was neither anger nor compassion.

Lectival understood that simply from Carl’s manner of only looking at him silently. Thus affirming Meriela who was standing beside him and Vilia who was looking at him from behind Carl just by moving his sights, he released a large breath.

It was clear that Carl reacted to that sound from the twitching of his eyebrows.

(Whatever, I won’t say that I don’t want to die.)

This body had died once anyway.

He’ll die for the world of the two people, and to go through life once more with the willpower of not backing down.

Lectival put strength into his body and rose up firmly.

He stood before Carl and looked directly into his golden eyes.

Lectival and Carl’s gazes mutually suppress and clashed against each other.

I can’t express enough gratitude for saving my life, but can I interpret your visit to mean that I’ll be moved away from here?

–…

Meriela and Vilia were astonished at Lectival stead-fast voice.

With the exception of being a <White>, Lectival who wasn’t any different from an ordinary human, questioned the dragon race’s Carl who surpassed 1000 years of age in an undaunted voice. This was something more surprising for the two of them.

It could also be said that they were shocked.

Until now, the majority of humans who came before Carl could only speak fumblingly while bowing.

Even the few exceptions of humans were people who had exceeded half their lifespans. There wasn’t a young human like Lectival who was unafraid of Carl until now.

Iya, even if he was frightened, he might not show it in his attitude. Still, how many humans in the country could do the same thing?

The two turned towards Lectival with faces filled with surprise, and watched over the course of events.

Was I wrong in my deduction?

Lectival added on a question to Carl who sank into silence.

Carl looked down upon Lectival quietly even after hearing those words, but

abruptly, he slacked his taut lips and raised the ends of his small mouth.

It was a slight smile unrecognizable by others except Carl’s parents and his late wife.

It was a smile which went unnoticed even by his daughter, Meriela.

Carl who could only view the large majority of humans as citizens, whom he ought to protect, felt refreshed and thrilled at Lectival’s attitude.

–Iya, it’s as Your Lordship () says

Once again, Meriela and Vilia became surprised when Carl addressed Lectival as Your Lordshipwhich was a word that carried a sign of respect.

To Carl who maintained his Duke’s deposition even during a first meeting and viewed the opposite party as a lower status, it was an unusual thing. He felt something besides a sense of respect towards the person who was heading towards death.

When is the departure?

He asked while facing Meriela.

He wanted to ask if it was possible to exchange farewells.

He wasn’t angry at Lectival’s attitude of prioritizing his daughter over himself and shook his head.

–It’s unfortunate but I’d like to leave. Preparations will be done this way, please follow

Chichiue!

Meriela raised a voice of opposition towards Carl who was urging Lectival to leave.

Lectival who was at the heart of the matter had no reason to object, and even though Vilia had the intent to oppose, she couldn’t possibly raise her voice.

Among them, only Meriela herself voiced her opposing volition.

Is it impossible to hold it off at least until tomorrow? Even if you depart now, you'd need to make camp immediately. Then…

Certainly, even if they depart now, the day was about to end.

If something was to happen to Lectival, the one to be troubled would be Carl.

However her father directed a gaze which held nothing but irritation and cut her off with a sentence.

There's no need to worry unnecessarily

Na…

Meriela was at a loss for words towards her father's look that conveyed 'you don't know anything so just keep quiet'.

That attitude seemed to be unlike her father's. Thinking up to this point, she concluded that he was being impatient.

That was it; her father was in a hurry.

For her father who drew pictures calmly to become impatient, couldn't it be due to an abnormality arising at the capital's war front…?

Chi, Chichiue!

Meriela chased after Carl's back that began moving once more and called out to him.

Carl came to a halt and scowled at her daughter without concealing his irritation.

–tsu! I've a request…!

For the sake of one friend, she resisted the overpowering glint in his eyes.

Please bring me along together with him!

It wasn't like she could do something if she went along together, but if she let things be, she believed that she couldn't call herself as his friend.

Chichiue! Please let me do so!

Seeing her daughter bowing deeply, Carl turned towards Lectival.

It surely must be due to his daughter’s good feelings, for her to want to do this so much — Carl thought but Lectival’s expression was stiff. It was slightly surprising and irritating to Carl.

There wasn’t a cloud in Carl’s affection for his daughter, rather, this affection deepened with the passing of years and became large.

He held anxiety for her daughter’s future when she didn’t show interest in men and dealt with military and government affairs. Yet he felt a peace of mind towards such a daughter as it made he feel that she was still his.

However, this illusion had perhaps started to shatter.

Thinking so, he became anxious as to what kind of feelings the man, whom his daughter had begun to be attached to, held in regards to her.

That might be why such words came out.

–Very well. It’ll be good for you to come. Hastily complete your preparations and come to the roof.

His daughter expressed words of gratitude to Carl who said so and exited the room.

◊◊◊

The destination of Lectival, Meriela, Vilia and Carl was the heart of the Holy City <Theotocos>, the temple with towering white walls located on the peak of Mt. Erumeire.

It was the head temple of the Four Worlds temples, the Misutoraru=harume <> Great Temple.

Once there, Lectival met the Four Worlds temples’ archbishop, Mireideia kiru Rupusuburugu=herume <>.

She was delighted at Lectival’s visit and recognized his qualities as the Emperor of the next era.

That was the guide to a harsh fate.

Although Lectival was thrown into a fate of no return, he shouldered on.

–Even if it’s dreadful or uneasy, even if I give up, I’ll not abandon myself. While I can discard the present and search for another route if I gave up, abandoning myself would mean to throw away my entire future

◊◊◊

While Lectival was in the midst of changing clothes, Carl and the others shared cups of tea.

The tea cakes were pastries cooked with the use of incense grass picked within the temple, and when eaten, a refreshing feeling will spread after a taste of sweetness.

–Mu, these’re fairly good…

Vilia, can these be made even back at home?

The two were drinking tea and eating pastries just like sisters. Carl was affirming the documents that he brought along, and was immersing in the work of signing those. Once Lectival was confirmed to be a <White>, his workload swelled up immediately.

However Carl handled them with vigour. Meriela and Vilia understood perfectly what kind of change was shown on his consciousness.

It was happiness. He had found a path of blessing for his country and people that he loved.

Before, he could only treat Lectival as a sacrifice, but with the opening of hostilities at the capital’s war front now, it’ll be a huge advantage for the Empire should Lectival rise up as the next Emperor, and more than anything, the biggest worry of not having an Emperor would be resolved.

For argument sake, even if Lectival was presented (to the alliance), not only would the next Emperor be lost, the country's interests would also be whittled to improve relationship with the alliance. It would bring about disappointment and suspicion of the people if the next Emperor and national interest were to be sold off to the enemy nation.

If it was before Lectival's arrival at the temple, if the alliance ask of it, if the war front continued to be in a deadlock, it's possible to pass off the capture of Lectival who's a war criminal as a reason for withdrawal. Even if the <White> was lost, since he wasn't officially the next Emperor, the Empire's side wouldn't suffer a serious blow. In that case, it was possible to punish Lectival as the wire-puller for the ex-Emperor's conduct. In brief, Lectival abused his status as a <White> and skilfully manipulated the ex-Emperor conduct with words. It might also be possible devise a setting whereby the ex-Emperor felt responsible because of that and committed suicide; hence the royal family's honour wasn't stained.

However, since the battle on Mira plains had started, and Lectival was now recognized as a <White>, in order to subdue this battle such that the Empire will get off with the shallowest wound, the country will be put in order under the name of the Crown Prince. Everything would be made as the ex-Emperor's responsibilities to preserve the country's prestige, hence completely breaking the alliance's fighting spirit. More accurately speaking, the best would be for the Crown Prince to destroy the pro-nobles who had lost the people's support and let the alliance army that had lost its reason to stay withdraw.

Moreover, he had received information from his subordinate before heading for this temple. 'Part of the alliance army is exerting its influence to escalate the dispute with the Imperial', if he make use of this information skilfully, he could advance negotiations with the alliance army from a superior position.

Carl greatly desired for strategies and schemes. Thereupon, it didn't matter if he were to take the blame if things could proceed smoothly. Compared to the previous days which were filled with bitterness, this might be considered as a drab paradise.

◊◊◊

Miko-hime Ririshia.

If the Archbishop has the highest authority in practical business () of the Four Worlds temples, then the Miko-hime is the symbol of the Four Worlds temples.

She’s the mediator between the next Emperor and the <King Sword> and an existence who supports the succession.

That’s all that was required of that existence.

◊◊◊

Part 2

*Pachipachipachi*, a small applause could be heard.

Drawn by the sound, the eyes of the five people fell upon young lady who wore a long robe with designs different from that of Mireideia’s.

Approximately fourteen or fifteen years old, she wore light silk layered garments that gave the viewer an ephemeral impression and had pale jade-coloured hair which flowed until the floor. Her eyes were closed but a smile was on her face.

–…

Her mouth opened and closed several times.

Although it was clearly understood from that action that words were being spoken, not a single sound was heard.

However, it seemed that Mireideia could hear her voice.

Ah, that’s right Ririshia, this person is the new <White>

Mireideia placed her hands on both of Lectival’s shoulders and pushed him to the front of the young lady.

Lectival was slightly hesitant but he floated an awkward smile and somehow managed to give his greeting.

White Dragon Duke and the others know her, she’s the Miko-hime of the Four Worlds temple as well as my imouto, Ririshia

–..

She raised the hems of her clothes and bowed.

Lectival leaked his voice upon seeing that graceful gesture.

Since the Miko-hime doesn’t has a name () besides her given name ()
until she married, please do call her Ririshia. And I think you may have noticed it but this child, in her role of the Miko-hime, she can neither speak nor see. However, she can understand the surrounding situation via intuition, hence it’ll be fine to treat her similarly to people who can see

It meant that the Miko-hime’s spatial perception was beyond ordinary people’s standard.

It was known within the temple that by committing to that role, a special ability was conferred. However, since the exact reason wasn’t revealed to anyone besides the Miko-hime herself and her-would-be partner, Mireideia didn’t seem to know it well either.

–…

Ririshia, who understood that Lectival was looking at her, opened her mouth and as expected, soundless words came out.

–?

However, he couldn’t hear anything.

Ririshia knew from Lectival’s movement that her voice wasn’t heard and her expression became just slightly clouded.

Mireideia hurriedly interpreted it verbally for Lectival.

’Please allow me to assist you in the ritual,’ so she says

Ah, so it was that…?! I too, pleased to be in your care

Lectival bowed to Ririshia hurriedly.

Ririshia received the bow with a smile which had slight traces of bitterness

remaining on it.

I believe you should hear it soon …But there could also be the problem of affinity…

*Bosoboso* Mireideia muttered from behind Lectival.

Based on her experience, unless both sides accept the connection, the time when they could hear either side's thoughts telepathically wouldn't arrive.

If she couldn't get them to hear one another, hindrances would appear during the ritual—and Mireideia began to consider postponing the ritual.

–…

–Ah

Ririshia accosted Lectival thrice.

When Mireideia thought 'unless I interpret again' and opened her mouth, Lectival let out a foolish sound.

She was momentarily doubtful but immediately realized the reason.

Finally, Mireideia released a sigh of relief.

Can you hear it?

Mireideia confirmed with Lectival just to be sure.

Lectival nodded.

I didn't hear it clearly but she seems to be asking about my physical condition..

–!

Ririshia's facial expression suddenly brightened up at Lectival's words.

He seemed to be right.

<–I’m glad… you’ve heard it properly…>

Ah, I can hear it clearly now

Compared to before, the voice reached his mind clearly.

Lectival felt that the young lady’s limpid voice was fascinating enough even without the air as a medium.

<Then please allow me to reintroduce myself. I’m the Miko-hime of the Four Worlds temple, Ririshia.>

Thank you for your kindness, I’m Lectival

<I know. I’ve heard from the Four Worlds that you’ve came from a distant world.>

Lectival became interested in what was called as the Four Worlds upon hearing Ririshia’s words.

It would appear that they were the most knowledgeable about everything including this parallel world.

It has been a while, Your Grace

<More than anything, White Dragon Duke too seems to be healthy. Be that as it may, the disturbance this time must have pained your heart no?>

Not at all, compared to Your Grace’s worries, it’s like brushing the scales of fish ()

As a Miko-hime, Ririshia returned a perfect reply to Carl’s greetings

Hearing that refined manner of speaking, Lectival spontaneously looked at Mireideia.

His eyes wanted to say ‘they’re sisters and yet—.’

–It’s fine even if you slip up during the ritual you know [6]? Pure white brat

Don’t be absurd

Yielding to the intimidating aura of Mireideia who had her eyes half-closed, Lectival quickly began to retreat.

It was fine to be thought as pathetic since a woman's wrath was frightening. Lectival murmured in his mind to nobody in particular.

<Nee-san, aren't you being hard on Lectival-sama?>

I won't apologize, I've to teach this greenhorn the severity of this world

Ririshia directed a voice containing great surprise towards her older sister and a sulky Mireideia abruptly averted her gaze.

The kindness of Ririshia who was looking at him apologetically pierced his heart so he put on a pretentious air for just a little.

Your Onee-san is probably worried about me right? She's a good Onee-san

Is that how it is…? If Lectival-sama says so…

Although it was said reluctantly, she seemed to have save Lectival's face. Lectival almost cried at being shown such consideration.

◊◊◊

While on the stairs that were heading deep into underground, Lectival came to know about the history of the <King Sword>.

A Shinto priest affiliated with the Four Worlds temple's ritual department, which knew about the <King Sword> and protected its secrecy continuously, recited its history while Lectival continued to listen quietly.

The founding Emperor stole the conceptual weapon, which was to be developed as the old Imperial's trump card, while it was in the middle of development, and named it the <King Sword> upon completion.

There was also the matter where fellow machines which were manufactured together with the <King Sword> went amok, and obliterated the old Imperial's capital and its peripheral areas entirely.

Presently, there was neither a country nor organization that had perfected the conceptual weapon; hence the <King Sword> was a unique one that was operational.

There were people who couldn’t endure the ritual which was meant to control its powerful strength and lost their lives before becoming the crown prince.

It was about overcoming the ritual, merging with the <King Sword>, and unable to wish for a death as an ordinary living thing.

There was no other way besides living as a weapon.

Lectival listened to everything and at the gloomy underground stairway, he chose his final option.

There, he decided to discard even the fact of giving up.

◊◊◊

A pure white light which shouldn’t exist in the deep underground filled the room.

He searched for the light source and looked up at the ceiling; it was high to the extent where it was hard to grasp the distance with his senses, making him slightly dizzy. However it could be understood that a part of the ceiling was emitting light.

Looking carefully, the pillars that were supporting the ceiling were also installed with light sources.

Although the principle behind the radiation of light wasn’t known, its brightness was to the degree where it was difficult to look straight at it.

–So you’ve come

Mireideia’s voice reached Lectival’s ears while he was surveying the surrounding from one end to another that was of indiscernible distance.

Although the voice reached him with a series of echoes, he could still pinpoint the location of the person who spoke.

It was because he saw the figures of several people at the centre of the vast underground.

Lectival began walking towards them.

Have you heard about the requirements?

It was at the centre of the figures.

A delicate magic formation was drawn on the floor which was made of something different from simple stone yet lustrous, and Mireideia stood at the heart of it.

In the vicinity were Ririshia and Shinto priests who had their faces concealed by veils.

The Shinto priests were holding staffs which easily exceeded their statures, and they silently bowed to Lectival. He was a little surprised at the Shinto priest who were clad in uniform clothing and thinned their individualities to match their figures, but he didn’t intend to go as far as asking.

To a certain extent, from the Shinto priest-dono of the ritual department

To be here after hearing it, that’s enough

Mireideia smiled.

It was a smile which seemed happy, yet at the same time, somewhat sorrowful.

Lectival could discern from her expression that Mireideia had an understanding of all of the historical facts.

Although it’s definitely in the midst of war now, and it might be unpleasant to learn the faults of the past war but you know, it’d help to think of this as part of the ritual

Rather than that, I think it has become a very easy-to-understand explanation

Is that so?

It was a bitter smile.

The pair floated an identical expression mutually, and laughed together just a little.

Mireideia felt genuinely relieved that Lectival came here even after knowing everything; Lectival held a sense of deep relief in having Mireideia whom he shared a secret with.

There weren't only glory or happiness in the 2000 years of record. Crime, sorrow and just about everything were recorded without anyone's perspective

As an inorganic substance, the <King Sword> recorded minutes of generations of Emperors devoid of any feelings as inorganic matter.

The generations of Emperors probably couldn't come up with an answer in regards to the founding Emperor's intentions for choosing records instead of memories. Although numerous generations of the entire temple's archbishops had elapsed, doubts persisted.

Perchance, the answer might be obtained.

Mireideia held expectation in the corner of her mind.

It isn't only inheriting. It's possible you might leave behind record here too

What kind of records would this young man leave behind, and what would the next era of Emperor who inherits that think? Her interest ran deep.

In fact, it surpasses any history books. Even if that is the world which was continuously looked on by just one person, it's the memory of this country

It might be a guidepost so as to not mistaken the path.

It might be a warning that advancing forward is where hell exists.

It might be a teaching that solitude is the Emperor's true friend.

It was a unique record; therefore the inheritor was just one person of the present.

Don't lose, Lectival. Once this ritual is finished, you'll obtain true solitude which is the Emperor's position, and true brethren that is the <King Sword>. For

starters, if you can’t win the final fight individually, you should be ashamed of yourself

<–It’s as Nee-san said. I can also shoulder part of the ritual, but unless Lectival-sama overcome this trial yourself, my existence will be meaningless in the end.>

Ririshia gazed at the young man clad in white with eyes that were closed.

Perhaps her eyes hid a strong will that was surely similar to Mireideia’s — thinking so, the young man who was the focus of the ritual wanted to see those eyes.

Glittering gems which could enchant many people, and a captivating heart of similar splendour.

To call it desire would be superficial, instead, it was a feeling of deep interest.

Seeking for that something which wasn’t him, it welled up in front of him.

Perhaps it was called longing by people.

Whether this child can fulfil her Miko-hime’s role and leave from here, too depends on you

For the girl who had to abandon her human life until now to fulfil her role as the Miko-hime, only Lectival can give her a new life.

However, what Ririshia truly desire might not be a new life.

<Nee-san, I…together with Nee-san…>

Indeed, she didn’t wish to leave the temple alone.

Both of the sisters who were separated thought that way mutually. Was that not proof that the time spent together and the feelings they held for each other weren’t all that were to their relationship?

Mireideia caressed her sister’s head and smiled kindly.

–If Ririshia isn’t here, then most of my reasons to stay here will disappear.

When both of us accomplished our roles, can you please take us along? Of course, everything will belong to you[7]

‘I’m terrible,’ though thinking so, she wished for it to be definitely realized sometime.

Supposedly it was realized, she would probably be proud of herself. That was something she anticipated very much.

–When that time comes, if Ririshia-san wish for it, then so be it

Therefore, let’s promise.

It was a tiny little promise.

If you could smile, that is surely happiness for you.

<–I…only know this temple. Even so, is that fine?>

Lectival smiled and replied to Ririshia who looked up at him in bewilderment.

He nodded while stroking her soft hair.

I am like you too, that’s why let’s have Mireideia-san guide us on various things…It’ll surely be fun

<Ha, hai…! Definitely! >

At the figure of Ririshia smiling happily, Mireideia also floated a happy smile.

And at that sight of the pair, Lectival’s smile deepened.

It was sincere smile of the young man who will risk his life hereafter.

◊◊◊

He was fighting against the world’s strongest weapon.

It was a conceptual weapon which once broke apart the earth, divided the sea and pierced the sky.

It had yet to awaken and was in Mireideia’s hands.

Standing before it was Lectival grasping tightly onto a small sword.

Soon, the ritual began. Wrapped in the magic formation’s light, Lectival parried the <King Sword> wield by Mireideia.

It was repeated many times over and when the <King Sword> awoke, its existence was displayed before Lectival.

In the midst of the violent wind, Lectival was convinced that the <King Sword> had awakened.

Without hesitation, she thrust the awakened <King Sword> towards Lectival’s right eye.

Mireideia was then sent flying out of the magic formation.

Hence, only the pair of Lectival and Ririshia remained.

◊◊◊

(Lectival-sama!)

Ririshia grasped the hilt strongly and the <King Sword> was further thrust in deeper.

Driving forward with a loud scream simultaneously, she pushed the edge of the sword in again with her small body. If the unification of the <King Sword> and the candidate didn’t progress, the <power> held by Ririshia was meaningless.

It wasn’t actually buried within the body; nonetheless, a rejection reaction occurred from the insertion of foreign substance.

If the fusion rate exceeded a fixed value, stabilization could be done by controlling the <King Sword> with the Miko-hime’s power, but from thereafter, the fusion would be dependent on the candidate himself.

<Lectival-sama! Please persevere!>

It was uncertain if he heard it.

Even so, she could only shout.

The <King Sword> was pushed in little by little, and while his face was stained with overflowing blood, Ririshia continued shouting.

She didn’t want to hurt the person who can smile gently to such extent.

However, just this once, even if she was emotionally hurt, it had to be accomplished.

<Once this ritual has ended, let’s go out together, Lectival-sama. Although I can’t do anything, I can at least make a box lunch! If you say it’s fine to be next to you, I’ll stay by you forever!>

Why was she this concerned about the young man, even she couldn’t honestly understand it well.

Was it because he was kind or that he didn’t see her as the Miko-hime, though she thought about it repeatedly, there wasn’t an answer.

(Still, I want to be together.)

There were numerous books in the great temple’s library, but for the Ririshia who couldn’t see, it wasn’t a place she had much affinity with.

She might possibly have perceived it if she was interested in the literature of the library.

At this time, she fell in love with the young man.

That was the result of the Four Worlds’ power which occupied most of the young girl’s inside being drawn towards the young man that was the <King Sword>’s vessel.

There might be people who would called it a warped love or laughed it off as a sham, yet even so, the young girl’s love was a truth in reality.

Among the successive generations of Miko-himes, there was one who exchanged love with the candidate before the ritual. Perhaps she was in an identical situation with the Ririshia of this time, but that Miko-hime wasn’t

aware of that truth throughout her life.

It was because she surely spent her days in bliss with the candidate who later became her husband.

Will Ririshia choose to be next to the Emperor as her duty? Will she hope to stand beside the Emperor as her wish?

Everything can wait until the ritual finished.

<Lectival-sama! I’m here!>

What was certain now was that the young girl called Ririshia was protecting the young man named Lectival.

And thus, the young man thought again that he wanted to see the smiling face of the young girl called Ririshia.

(Nee-san…)

To the former Mireideia Kiru, Ririshia Kiru was her only little sister; and to Ririshia, Mireideia Kiru Rupusuburugu=herume was her only elder sister.

She was an elder sister who wouldn’t be happy being someone else’s elder sister besides her.

And an elder sister who even became the archbishop for her sake.

She wanted to pass time as sisters once more with such an elder sister.

She wanted to return being family again after clearing their obligations as archbishop and Miko-hime.

(–I’m fine with being just Ririshia.)

That was her only wish.

As a candidate for the Miko-hime, not once had she considered about her future until now.

Only preparing for the coming of time while carrying out official business as the

Miko-hime, her raison d’etre was to only make the inheritance ceremony a success.

And if she accomplished this role, she would be beside this young man as Ririshia this time. At that time, this young man will surely not see her as Miko-hime.

She wanted to be seen as Mireideia’s younger sister, just Ririshia.

(Lectival-sama!)

Perhaps that would be wishing for too much.

It might be impossible for her who became just Ririshia, to be at the side of the person who would be the crown prince.

(Lectival-sama…!)

Looking up at the sky, Lectival shouted while on his knees. He tore his hands off from the cracked courtesy sword, covered both hands and clenched them.

*Pikuri*, Lectival’s hands shifted and Ririshia poured in more strength upon noticing it.

–u, a, aaaaaaaaaah!

The <King Sword> was released from Ririshia’s hands and slowly sank in.

That was proof of Lectival accepting the <King Sword> himself.

At the same time, golden light ran into the left eye which wasn’t pierced by the <King Sword>.

A vertically divided pupil; a golden eye of a dragon was there.

<Just a bit more, Lectival-sama!>

Ririshia clung onto Lectival’s body to withstand the gale that had further increased in power.

Stretching out her hands towards the back that was far bigger than hers, she

hugged him strongly while gnawing her lips.

‘It’s warm,’ was how she felt.

–Tsu!!

Spilling tears of blood, he still responded to her.

Then, she’ll bet everything to help him.

<–!>

From its guard, the <King Sword> changed into particles of the light from before, and revolving around Lectival who was in the centre of the gale, slipped into Lectival’s left eye little by little. Perceiving that a crossed star, which was the crest of the Empire’s royal family, had begun to shine, Ririshia sang a Shinto ritual prayer with her non-existent voice.

<–Come, come, come forth, light of this land, star of this land, darkness of this land, moon of this land–>

One who guides.

One who follows.

A person who becomes the guidepost of this land until his life comes to an end.

I’m together with thou.

A thing that will become what thou desire.

I beseech.

<–One who illuminates light greater than the depths of darkness. Together with us–>

With me.

<–Come forth–>

A converging burst of light.

The swirling gale headed towards the centre.

Ririshia who was in that centre gnawed through her lips.

–Tsu!

Her face momentarily grimaced in pain and enduring that, she lifted her face.

Her lips were damp from the trickling of blood, and she twined her arms around Lectival’s neck.

<Lectival-sama, forgive my discourtesy!>

That voice might have been reprimanding her.

She forcibly suppressed part of her emotions that was hesitating, and forced her lips onto Lectival’s.

–!!

On the point of contact, a connection of <power> sprung forth in the space between Ririshia and Lectival.

The pupil of the golden dragon eye shrank at once.

Ririshia turned towards Lectival and after sensing her awareness drifting off, she lost consciousness.

◊◊◊

Yo, Nii-chan

A familiar reception hall made from stone.

Standing at the centre, Lectival faced a single man.

He had his white hair that reached his shoulder tied up in a bundle, and was dressed in a pure white appearance. Lectival knew that appearance.

Aa, you don’t have to be so surprised, you’ll surely meet us, me once

–Who might you be?

Against the man bearing the same appearance as himself, Lectival put himself on guard without concealing his vigilance. Considering this situation and time, it would be strange to not be wary of him.

The man crossed his arms and groaned slightly in response to Lectival's question, and as if he thought of something, he raised his index finger.

Hmm, let's see. Memories before he became the Emperor and other extras of the first Emperor I guess?

Are you saying that you're the founding Emperor?

Lectival piled on another question.

It's different, the me who became the Emperor doesn't know the me of before becoming Emperor. I do not have the ability to recollect, thus whatever was said will be mostly forgotten after a sleep

The man shrugged his shoulders happily and grinned at Lectival.

Your face seems to say 'why am I here'

–Your good conjecture saves me the trouble

Haha, there's no need for gratitude. I and the Emperors hitherto are essentially the same things. It's probably fine to call us comrades or brethren

The man uncrossed his arms and approached Lectival with a step.

Lectival lowered his waist and strengthened his vigilance towards the man's movements.

Oioi, you don't have to be that cautious. Until now, you're the person with the strongest sense of wariness

Just in case, I've a responsibility, that's why

The responsibility to survive is it?

In regards to that question, Lectival just slightly sneered and nodded.

Ee (yes), if I'm to die, I will want it to be in an appropriate opportunity. It might be a different case if it was I from ago

An appropriate opportunity, is it? Surprisingly, there might be a lot

Whether there are many or little, I'll be the one to decide

It's his decision to give up or not. Only he can bear responsibility for the things he had decided.

What a difficult fellow. If you're being too difficult, important things may slip past you someday

I'll be steps ahead before it escapes. If it's just escaping, it's fine if I catch it again

The man was momentarily caught off guard by Lectival's words, thus he opened his big mouth and burst into laughter.

Ahaha! That's right, it'll be fine to catch it if it's just escaping, and that's about it –but,

The man disappeared.

–Tsu!

The sound of metal reverberated a moment later. Before he noticed it, Lectival's hands was gripping a wide sword with complex pattern engraved on its inner edge, and defended against the drawn out sword of the man who appeared before him with it.

There're things in the world that disappear if they escaped you know

The man's eyes were clear black.

His eyes were straightforward, without a shred of hesitation.

I'm here to give a final advice to fellows who will become Emperors

He pulled back his sword ad unleashed a new slash immediately.

It was considerably faster and heavier than Mireideia's, and it was due to Lectival moving his body and consciousness at the same speed that he was able to respond.

His body and consciousness were in perfect synchronization. It was a sensation that he had never experienced before.

Whatever, I won't say to not let it escape. Losing something for eternity, maa, is that person's responsibility

Mowing down from upper left to the lower right, and from lower right to the left, his series of attacks cut apart the air and produce clouds () as the man approached Lectival.

You too, would do well to remember it

It was a blow by raising the sword above the head. If Lectival was to receive it, his arm would become numb.

What…

Rebuking his numbed arm, Lectival warded off the man's sword. The man then withdrew to his starting position in a single motion before Lectival's counterattack reached him, causing Lectival's sword to cut empty air.

We're abnormalities. Somewhere in the equivalent of our minds is strange without fail. It was made to be strange

His figure disappeared once more, and this time, he launched a surprise attack from the sky.

Lectival leaped back from that spot, and ascertaining that the massive edge of that man's sword had scrapped off the floor, he went towards the man and swung down a strike.

I wonder if you've a sense of self-awareness

The man decisively discarded the sword overhead and aimed at Lectival's jaw

with his fist.

Unable to kill his momentum, Lectival twisted his body to avoid it.

The pair had switched positions.

Let’s see, that may be so

Lectival raised his sword overhead and parried off the sword which was aiming for him while descending from above.

Sparks scattered and shone on the two men with identical faces. The sword which was repelled by Lectival returned to its owner’ hands as if possessing a will.

Brandishing the sword which had returned twice, then thrice, he faced Lectival.

But even so, I don’t particularly care.

Hou

The pair simultaneously covered the distance between them and drew close at the same time. Moreover they unleashed their swords and stopped the blows concurrently.

And what sort of problem is there? If abnormality, heterogeneous, heresy and different things are sins, that’s just saying the world is simply shouldering everything as sins

There weren’t identical things which existed in this world as a pair.

The world as a whole was made up of different things.

Sins etc., I wouldn’t say how if I’m compared to I who lost sight of myself

Lectival faced the man and displayed a stance of thrusting, and the man too turned a posture of thrusting towards Lectival.

I’ll live on as myself. Be it sin, retribution, responsibility and the things which I’m burdened with, I’ll carry all of them…!

A lunge and a sound were produced.

The cloud ebbed and Lectival had pierced the man.

–Is that so? That itself might be an interesting way to live

Looking down at the sword piecing through his chest, the man had a refreshed expression. Lectival's body felt goose bumps at that expression.

However, there are things which won't go smoothly just by being interesting

At the man's words, seven weapons materialized in the surrounding.

There were a large sword, sabre, naginata, spear, kodachi, sharp sword and dagger.

Lectival realized they were the <King Sword>'s appearances of the past at some point of time.

And seeing those blades rushing at him all at once, he stepped back from that place in one motion.

However, the short spear and kodachi pierced his shoulder and flank.

Guh

The pain wasn't due to his body being pierced by them.

Resentment and hatred which flowed from the swords ran about his body, and the pain given to he made he feel as if he was being poured with melted iron.

What a blessing it is to be only feeling pain

Unlike from before, the man directed a cold gaze at Lectival who was showing expression of anguish.

Humans are living things that grow accustomed even to pain. No matter how painful that time was, they'd think nothing of it after a while

The man took the large sword which was floating in the empty space with his hands and pierced Lectival's abdomen.

–Tsu!

A soundless voice spilled out from Lectival’s mouth.

His body wasn’t trampled down simply by pain but a pure <agony>.

Jealously, grudge and even envy will be forgotten when there’s pain

His back was thrust by a sharp sword, his thigh by a dagger and both his legs were pinned onto the floor with the naginata and sabre.

It’s probably painful right? Even so, people will get used to it before long

The man murmured sadly while looking down on Lectival.

Will people completely forget the notion called pain someday? I’ve come to think in such manner

‘We might be the first’ — the man’s words permeated into Lectival’s body.

However, it was neither agreement nor allegiance that welled up within Lectival but repudiation and opposition.

The suffering he felt from Meriela’s hand, Vilia’s sadness from her every word, and agony from Carl’s stern look, caused him to persevere in that place.

‘This isn’t the place to give up,’ the him inside of him shouted.

–So, how…

Lectival invigorated his trembling body forcibly and grasped the fallen sword again.

His body temperature transferred onto the metal grip. Coincidentally, the sword pulsed once.

‘Dokun’, a pulsation shook the air.

It’s because of getting accustomed to pain, you say…!

His shout invoked a new pulsation, and each time the <King Sword> shook the

air with a ‘dokun’, it became light one by one, going back and forth.

If growing accustomed to pain can overcome pain, then I won’t allow the denial of it

Accustomed or unaccustomed, the person wouldn’t forget the pain.

It’s fine if we remember. As long as we who cannot forget remember the pain, people will not forget it

He stood firmly on the ground, prepared his sword, arranged his breath, and seized the man before him.

And that’s how you come about right?

The man floated a slightly surprised face at Lectival’s question.

I see, and there’s the fact of you coming to this place

Thus soliloquizing, he showed a faint smile and prepared his sword.

Then live that way

With the man’s words as the signal, they aimed for one another in a forthright linear motion.

–Tsu!!

Corresponding to their breaths, the muted sound of cutting through cloth penetrated their bodies mutually.

End of Chapter 5

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# Chapter 6

Last Edit: 19 Aug 16.

The awakened Lectival felt the existence of the <Emperor Sword> which had assimilated with his body, and held a trace of anxiety towards his future.

For Lectival who didn't possess the common knowledge and experience of the successive Emperors, while the <Emperor Sword> was his body's mysterious other half, it might also be a fragment which cannot be relinquished for a second time.

Whether it was to live or to die, depend on the <Emperor Sword> and him. Now that he was attached to this world, there wasn't the option of withdrawing.

The story of the young man called Lectival Ruitsu=Rorudo Eruvihhi (
) began here.

◊◊◊

While Lectival was groaning 'un un' at his future, a trifling incident occurred at the corridor that was slightly away from the room where Lectival was put to sleep.

The two parties involved were mutually called hime.

On one end was the daughter of the White Dragon duke who seemed to be enduring something, and her eyebrows trembled at the outset. She stared at the other party fixedly, and was filled with the spirit of not overlooking a single action.

–Your Grace, you may be the Four Worlds temple's Miko-hime but such rash acts are troubling.

Directly opposite was the Four Worlds temple's Miko-hime, Ririshia, who received her unfriendly look and then refused expressionlessly with her emotions subdued. It was a confrontation between two people who mutually recognized one another as a rival that they cannot be negligent of.

I’m not being rash. I’m acting in accordance to the duty of the Miko-hime, which is to support the Emperor.

After the inheritance ritual of the <Emperor Sword>, Ririshia regained her voice and eyesight upon completing her role safely, and rather than her previous neat impression, she expressed vigour befitting of her age.

With the grudge of being forced to live in the midst of darkness until now dispelled, she ran around the great temple’s interior every day; an activity which surprised her elder sister, Mireideia.

Her garments also changed to match the change in behaviour, where the recent guise of Ririshia within the temple consisted of undergarment which exposed her shoulders and a short kasahakama ().

Although she had spent most of her life in the great temple, it was similar to visiting a place for the first time for Ririshia of the present. Certainly, there were large differences in these cases where the surrounding’s situation was directly sent to her brain as information as well as obtaining vision. Perhaps these differences woke up her hidden true nature.

Ririshia, whose tomboy talent was blooming, was doing her daily routine for these several days, but was now on a visit, which Meriela found faults with, to Lectival’s bedroom.

Ririshia was at an overwhelming advantageous position if limited to within the great temple. As Lectival’s mediator (), Meriela was in his bedroom for most of the day but even so, while waiting for him to awaken, there was the job of being an assistant to her father Carl who was attending to official business inside the temple. At that time, Vilia who was helping Meriela accompanied her too, hence only the great temple’s Shinto priest remained behind in Lectival’s bedroom.

Ririshia who kept aiming for the time when Meriela was absent, repeatedly trespassed unlawfully into Lectival’s bedroom. If it was a staff member of the great temple, it was a given to prioritize the Miko-hime’s convenience over the White Dragon’s hime. They’d chaperoned her intrusion and furthermore, concealed that fact from Meriela.

Until now, time of the sky (), locational advantage and harmony of people (

) were completely Ririshia’s allies.

However, she was unfortunate on this day.

She was discovered by Meriela, who had unexpectedly finished her work early, at the place where she exited from the bedroom. Thus, she was being preached in the middle of the corridor.

Yet Ririshia didn’t have a fragment of reflecting.

The Miko-himes of the Four Worlds temple are the greatest sympathizers of the Emperors and they received teachings to become their support. Naturally, that includes me too.

Lectival has yet to officially ascend as the crown prince. Therefore, he’s still a guest of the Lindovorum Duke House.

The candidate would be officially recognized as the crown prince once he awaken after the ritual.

Hence Meriela who still treated Lectival as a guest of the White Dragon said so.

She rounded off her words in a manner that wasn’t impolite, but her look was sharp to the extent that even men of the same dragon tribe would run away barefooted.

Regarding Lectival-sama, even if he’s a guest of the Lindovorum House, Meriela-dono who isn’t the Head of the Duke house doesn’t have the right to choose his guest right?

Perhaps Ririshia who received that look without feeling it amounting to even a gentle breeze, possessed courage that was above the dragon tribe’s in a certain sense.

Pointing out Meriela’s vague official position, Ririshia destroyed the validity of her action and strengthened her assault.

Lectival-sama’s body is important to the Empire. I think it’s questionable for a duke’s daughter to decide.

U…

Meriela was at a loss for words from being pointed out by the sharp-tongue Ririshia.

With the closure of the ritual, rumours began spreading about the birth of a crown prince in the Holy City. This was a rumour spread intentionally by Carl, and it might take several days for the information to be disseminated throughout the whole of the Empire from the Holy City. It might even restraint the alliance or Imperial's activities if used skilfully.

However, once Lectival's existence becomes extensively evident, Meriela's role as a guardian would naturally be terminated. Even if Meriela cannot protect him, the Empire as a country will safeguard him; since there wasn't a reason to not protect a candidate who had appeared in the temple and their place.

Thus, when his existence is publicly known, Meriela wouldn't be able to decide matters concerning Lectival personally.

Although it has yet to be formally dealt with, the position of candidacy was already publicized; in comparison to Meriela who didn't have a personal relationship with Lectival or an official privilege to him, it was apparent that the Miko-hime's opinion took precedence since it was a similar existence (to the Emperor) and was also clearly established as the temple's doctrine.

I shall take over the role of assisting Lectival's sama. Meriela-dono just has to support Lectival-sama as the White Dragon's adviser; can you focus on that task?

'This girl is considerably wicked,' thought Meriela.

She was such a neat and lovely Miko-hime that it was unthinkable for her to be dyed pitch black in several days.

In reality, it was a common knowledge which the Miko-hime, who had become the Emperor's support, ought to know; a result from receiving training inside the temple. However, it had the feeling of getting entangled in a nasty fraud for the ignorant Meriela.

Meriela thought that Ririshia's elder sister would lament if she knew, but since it

was that person, Meriela felt that Mireideia would immediately conclude it with a laugh. While thinking so, a part of those sisters' true nature might be identical.

Meriela raised her vigilance against Ririshia inside her mind, yet for what it's worth, she wasn't the type of woman to admit her defeat here. Although it had yet to be officially announced, she definitely had a reason to assist the crown prince.

Breathing deeply, she commenced her assault on the huge wall that was the Four Worlds temple's Miko-hime who was standing tall before her.

–Your Grace's view is extremely plausible; but similarly, I too have a reason to protect him..

Hime-sama!!

However that assault was interrupted by an ally.

Like a spoiled child, Meriela turned teary-eyed towards the maid who interrupted her speech. She thought to keep the fact that she was reflexively bracing herself for a rebuttal at the moment when her speech was interrupted as a secret.

Even so, Vilia who normally ought to have noticed such significance behind her mistress's look wasn't showing the attitude of even being slightly aware of it at that time and raised a large voice before Meriela and Ririshia. Meriela recalled that such a similar situation happened before.

If she wasn't mistaken, at that time—

That dying person ()… not that, Lectival-denka has awakened!!

The two of them exchanged looks at those words. An unconcealed wariness could be  mutually and clearly seen in their looks. *Jirijiri*, once their exchange of looks ended, both of them started running along the corridor.

It was a truly neck to neck run, with one side leading ahead and ebbing behind alternatively. Vilia who was left behind began chasing after them hurriedly, and the pair started their second match of war of words prior to now while running.

The Shinto priests and nuns fled away from their route with great haste.

Meriela-dono! How about stopping this improper conduct of running in the corridor!?

Speak for yourself, Your Grace. As the Miko-hime, you're a lady who gathers the citizens' reverence. You shouldn't be running noisily with your footsteps going 'dosun dosun dokan dokan'.

My future husband, the soon-to-be crown prince-denka, has awakened; to not be the first and foremost person to give her greeting is the shame of a Miko-hime! Nay, the shame of a woman.

There isn't such a theory right!? Leave this to me; and isn't it fine to greet him at your leisure later!?

Saying such thing! You plan to give Lectival-sama a wake-up kiss right!?

Haa!?

It was a harsh false accusation.

Meriela felt indignant at the words of Ririshia who was in a state of excitement. She persuaded herself that she never had such intention.

In the first place, there wasn't the feeling of a man and woman during the time with him; and their relationship of a guardian and the one under guardianship had yet to end.

Therefore, Ririshia's words were a false accusation.

Your Grace! That vulgar manner of speaking is unbecoming of a Miko-hime!

Aren't you misunderstanding?!

Ee that's right!

Meriela strengthened her tone and asserted, turning her face that had become a deep red due to anger and bashfulness towards Ririshia.

However, it was obvious that the Miko-hime seemed to be further excited by those words.

Isn’t it indecent of you to remain in a gentleman’s room every day until the early morning?

Na!

The redness of Meriela’s face became even more pronounced than before.

Moreover, her mouth *pakupaku* opened and closed; and surprise was expressed with her whole body.

That isn’t all! Aren’t you washing Lectival-sama’s clothing?!

How did you know that!?

Ririshia pursued further.

Meriela’s speed had noticeably decreased.

I was informed by the court ladies! ‘The White Dragon’s hime-sama and crown prince-denka relationship is good right?’ they said. Even I want to get along well with Lectival-sama!

Ririshia cried, even abandoning her first personI which she had kept up at great pain.

(TN: Ririshia was using  until now to address herself, but used  in her previous statement.)

Guu…

Meriela barely let out a ‘guu’ sound in response, but the blush on her face was perilously increasing further.

Wherever it might be, women had a fondness for this sort of gossip, and it seemed that the great temple wasn’t an exception.

In reality, Lectival’s clothes was washed by Meriela on numerous occasions, more so when compared to Vilia. Although she personally did it with the

feelings of simply being an older sister that was too helpful to her younger brother—even in public gaze, she made such an excuse—it seemed that the surroundings viewed it with a different perspective.

And the match was decided when Lectival's living room came into view.

I shall not ask what kind of relationship Lectival-sama and Meriela-done have! However, I'll emerge victorious here!

Ah!

Seizing that one instant of opportunity when Meriela's speed dropped, Ririshia sped up greatly. She separated from Meriela in one breath and burst into Lectival's living room.

Thus while gasping; she raised her face to give her wake-up greetings.

Iyaa, I thought to pay you a visit since I was freed from my job but I never thought you'd wake up. My luck is very good.

I'm not sure if it's a question of luck but I'm grateful to you for coming to visit.

The sight of her elder sister chatting congenially with Lectival left her dumbfounded.

The two of them didn't notice Ririshia's presence and continued their talk as it.

The neglected Ririshia *pokanto* opened her mouth and stiffened up.

Aren't you being too stiff? Rather, you're the crown prince so it'd be awkward if you use honorifics towards me.

Is that how it is?

Tentatively our ranks are the same within the temple…maa, since you've yet to receive the official appointment of regent formally, it's fine as I'm your senior. Hora, since you inherit the <Emperor Sword> without ascending to the throne, you aren't a half-Emperor (). By the way, have you heard of regency and so forth?

If I remember correctly, it's the only position which can perform national affairs and politics excluding the Emperor; fundamentally an Emperor, it's a position appointed to the crown prince by the present Emperor in general. It's when accession to the throne cannot be carried out legally during the Emperor's absence right? Maa, I've an excellent teacher within arm's reach in the White Dragon palace, so I can remember at least this much.

If the accession can be done, though it still differs from the norm. Depending on the legal interpretation, the accession is possible even outside of the empire royal assembly but officially it's part of the enthronement ceremony. Doing it while the mourning has yet to end is a little you know…there might be huge opposition even if it's made to be a special case. Ah, by the way, half-Emperor is—

In the empire law, as a general rule, the crown prince carry out the accession in the Emperor's presence —legally succeeding the throne—and he can only call himself the Emperor after the Emperor's death, can. Thus when the mourning for the previous Emperor of one year ended, the accession to the throne will be notified overseas and the matter for holding a ceremony for the enthronement will be decided.

Legally speaking, the crown prince ascends to the throne when the Emperor dies after the accession; but from the standpoint of the official stance, succeeding the throne can be considered by means of both the accession and enthronement ceremonies. On that occasion, the Emperor that performed only the accession is called half-Emperor.

That being the case, you've yet to be a half-Emperor. Ma, since the accession and enthronement will be done simultaneously; you probably will not be called half-Emperor.

Haa…

As their conversation progressed until there, Ririshia's consciousness began to show signs of recovery. There might also be the fact that signs of Meriela and Vilia were drawing closer from behind.

However, with that sluggish movement, there was the danger of wind in some respects.

Ne…nee-san—tte, kyaa!

As Ririshia was in such a condition, she twisted her feet; it became a difficult situation where she faced and threw herself onto the carpet which was spread across the floor.

Ririshia was unable to perform an ukemi and fell directly face-first onto the carpet magnificently.

(TN: Ukemi is the technique of falling safely, like a break-fall.)

*Betan*, a sound of fine quality spread out across Lectival's living room, and the kasahakama which wasn't long swayed gently, exposing the cloth beneath. It used an abundance of decoration cloth and was a light blue article of the highest grade.

—

Both Lectival and Mireideia were bereft of speech at the tragedy of the sudden intruder.

They gazed on like fools at the concerned party of the tragedy, and the silence continued.

Please wait up, Your Grace! tte…ara…?

Hime-sama, please avoid…eh, Your Grace…?

Meriela who flew into the room moments later was dumbstruck at the sight of the Miko-hime's whole body lying stretched out on the floor.

Moreover, Vilia who appeared from the rear of Meriela noticed the disastrous scene within the room and sank into silence.

A time of heavy emptiness enveloped the five people.

◊◊◊

It was peaceful every day.

Looking from Lectival's point of view in life afterwards, it was fine to say that

the time frame of several days from his investiture of crown prince to heading towards the capital were his last peaceful days in life.

Hereafter, he always existed as the regent or the Emperor, and lost the peace from the bottom of his heart due to this responsibility.

He was certainly comforted by the time spent with his Empress and children, but that was only from his standpoint as the Emperor. It was the last time when that way of thinking that was Lectival's individuality remained in his and the surrounding people's minds; thereafter, it became where the thought of I who exist for the people ()  occupied their minds.

In addition, only the people who knew the Lectival of the White Dragon palace and those that were in the temple at this time, remembered the young man called Lectival as an individual; hence they were few in numbers.

And now, the three dragons of blue, black and red.

No matter how many times the three people appeared in the spun legend of the hero named Lectival, they'd occasionally carried out their brilliant () roles.

It was one turning point of the era when they met Lectival. The fact that the encounter was written down asturning point of the erain the three people's memoirs alike was evidence itself.

The setting of the legend changed from a country to a continent, and then from a continent to the world. The period where the three of them lived was such an era.

◊◊◊

When Lectival entered the square gazebo, there were three men and women seated around a round table.

The first person was a small young lady with long and straight black hair. Her short stature was wrapped in numerous garments of ornamental cloth. She turned her narrowed eyes sleepily towards Lectival, seemingly searching for something with a gaze that felt vast.

The second person was a good looking man who had his short and deep crimson hair cut evenly. His large build which was covered by slender and firm muscles

was dressed in clothing similar to Carl’s. His attitude of closing his eyes without even sparing a glance upon perceiving Lectival’s arrival, might possibly be proof of his rejection.

With loosely braided hair that imitated the colour of the blue sky and spilled across her back, the third person was a woman. She seemed to possess a relatively gentle ambience, but in fact it was also plausible that she had hint of unknown depth.

When Lectival finished his short observation of the three people, Carl lined up next to him and began the introductions while pointing out to them respectively.

Black Dragon Duchess, Anasutashiya fuon Nizuheggu (
).

Red Dragon Duke, Furuderikku baruga Suvuarogu ().

Blue Dragon Duchess, Maria vivi fuon Ruviatan (
).

Originally, it was etiquette to personally stand up and give one’s name, but those three people had no reason to show expression of gratitude () towards Lectival.

As they had declared independence from the Empire’s royal family in opposition to the behaviour of the present Emperor, they weren’t affiliated to any kind of public office, hence there wasn’t a need to show courtesy to Lectival who was merely a crown prince.

Iya, it might be a form of courtesy itself for the three people to even appear before nobles from counties besides the Empire, .

However, this place was the Empire and they were descendants of the four dragons that were ordered by the founding Emperor to safeguard it.

They had a pretext to even cut down the Emperor if he was to throw the Empire into chaos.

However, they didn’t eliminate Lectival this time.

Just that—

–Carl…this obligation, I’ve fulfilled it.

The Black Dragon Duchess Anasutashiya stood up gently, faced towards Carl and Lectival and declared so. The shaking of Carl’s trembling shoulders was also transmitted to Lectival.

Proceeding on, the Red Dragon Duke Furederikku uncrossed his arms and stood up from his seat. He was taller than Lectival upon standing up, and scowled at him as if despising him.

Certainly, I’ve already compromised whilst being on time-constraint. You’ve no complaints right?

Lectival couldn’t conceal his surprise at their behaviour.

He had yet to introduce himself.

His existence might indeed be worthless to them, but to make light of a person who was to become the head of state even for an instance, he couldn’t understand that reasoning.

It might be the case of choosing whether to like or dislike a person. However, they shouldn’t choose a ruler based on likes or dislikes. If they were truly thinking of the country, weren’t there things they ought to prioritize more than their personal feelings?

Carl-chan, I’ll leave the rest to you.

Following them was the Blue Dragon Duchess Maria who rose up while floating a sweet and warm smile. She was smiling at Carl that was standing besides Lectival and at that time, she never looked at Lectival.

Lectival was astonished at this situation and couldn’t think properly, but Carl was in a similar state too. He obstructed their way with a flushed face.

Yo, you…what’re you thinking!?

He glared at them with quivering lips. It was a serious matter of the Empire, yet for them to not take the crown prince that was the strongest hand into consideration, what were they planning?

However, they didn’t even wavered a little when receiving that look.

They were dragon tribes of similar rank to Carl, thus that look didn’t hold any significant meaning to them. In fact, Furederikku shaking his head as if amazed informed Lectival and Carl.

Isn’t it obvious? We’ve declared independence from the royal family, and although we’ll defend the Empire, we won’t serve as its (royal family) subordinates.

Preposterous! The contract with the founding Emperor…

About that, Carl-chan

Maria directed a troubled smile towards Carl, but her golden eyes weren’t smiling the slightest.

The founding Emperor’s will was to protect the Empire. It’s true that we swore fealty to the royal family, but we don’t hold loyalty towards a crown prince who doesn’t know the good and evil for the country. Besides, there isn’t any definite proof that he can bring this chaos to a close is there? I don’t hate gambling but we also plan to discern the place and time for it.

Rather than taking part in a gamble that was full of uncertain factors, they ought to choose a method which could reliably bring the status quo to a conclusion; that was what Maria said.

—

Whilst being speechless, Carl looked at the last remaining person, the Black Dragon Duchess, Anasutashiya.

His gaze was inquiring if her thoughts were the same.

Both of their gazes intertwined and as expected, Anasutashiya gave s small nod.

–Un…bye Carl, let’s play again sometime.

Saying so, she spun her body around. There wasn’t a sign of hesitation seen from that action.

Maria followed her, and Furederikku also turned towards Carl’s rear.

Wait! If you said that you’ll protect the Empire, you don’t mean…

Only Furederikku looked back upon Carl’s voice.

–It has been decided. We’ll spearhead our armies and devote ourselves to crushing () the alliance. There won’t be a need for the Empire army or the nobles who promised their cooperation. We’ll also repel the barbarians of the Imperial as it is.

Na…ku!

At Furederikku’s words, Carl was feeling dizzy from the remnants of surprise.

He knew of the crisis-like situation at the capital war front, but it was beyond his expectations that his three companions would use a strong measure abruptly. In that case, wouldn’t it just induce unneeded enmity in countries from both the alliance and the vicinity?

Certainly, if they were to resort to such strong measure, the alliance’s main force would be annihilated in a short time and dampened their intent of invading.

However, what awaits before them will be a war with the alliance which they cannot extricate themselves from. The surrounding countries might also view the Empire as a dangerous country.

He must prevent that alone whatever the cost may be.

Carl opened his mouth to stop the three people.

However, he was interrupted by a stiff metallic-like voice which reverberated within the square gazebo.

—It’d be troubling if you’re to mess around, you inflexible people. Did your thoughts fossilize after such a long life?

The young man standing next to him murmured without facing the three people who were leaving.

Even Carl who lived more than a thousand years felt his emotions swayed, thus the other three people should have also felt something.

–What?

Being denounced by Lectival on their first meeting, they came to a halt completely and simultaneously turned around.

In general, their facial expressions were stiff; though in Furederikku's case, his pupils were split sharply due to excessive anger.

One trait of the dragon clans was their dragon eyes, though they'd never appear if they live their daily lives in human forms. It's just that when their feelings become worked up, in the process of returning back to their dragon forms to control the overflowing magic, their pupils split apart hence becoming dragon eyes.

In short, the extent of their anger can be judged by looking at their eyes.

Recently, the dragon tribe developed a technique to control their magic efficiently so it can't be said for certain; but nevertheless regardless of officially or privately, people with connections to them placed strong belief in this evaluation standard and made sure to act accordingly.

In addition to the imperial wrath of the notorious dragon tribe that wasn't influenced by the inside and outside of the Empire, the existence of them showing their dragon eyes in human forms were also objects of fear to each and every person.

However, Lectival's expression didn't even flinch when Furederikku showed his dragon eyes.

The <King Sword> possessed an ability that constantly preserved its user in his best condition. Due to one of its abilities, his anger was removed from his thoughts, hence he spoke with indifference.

I said don't mess around, or is it that your old ears aren't working too?

—!

From those words, the response was diverged among the three people.

Both Anasutashia and Maria clearly understood that it was a provocation, and held a compelling doubt rather than impulsive anger towards Lectival's words. The women didn't show any movements but Furederikku who was taken in by that taunt, widened his dragon eyes at once and upon refining the enormous amount of magic within his body, produced a magic square of summoning magic in the empty space in an instant.

A single handle protruded from the magic square.

It wasn't wrapped with leather straps but scale-like metal, and it being wide and long indicated the hugeness of the sword's edge that would come after it.

Furederikku gripped the handle and exhaling a short breath, swung it in Lectival's direction.

Lectival too didn't intend to receive that strike in silence.

He simultaneously revealed his silver dragon eye in his right eye with a blink while composing a magic square which was different from Furederikku's almost unconsciously, and gripped a slender handle that had similarly appeared from the magic square. Its handle was wrapped with shiny platinum threads; a white sword that was the closest to him.

—ku!

Facing the great sword directed towards him, Lectival strike it with that thin sword—a katana.

It didn't break; it was because he essentially understood that it was impossible for it to break that he was able to perform an absurd interception which didn't give the feeling of having a fragment of martial arts. The metallic clashing and fricative sounds resounded until his brain, and in the mere moments when they dissolved and vanished into the skies, Furederikku guessed the true identity of that sword.

The sword that Lectival had summoned was the one and only conceptual weapon in this world.

–<King Sword> ku!

There was a meaning behind Furederikku's shriek-like shout.

At the time when the previous crown princes inherited the <King Sword>, just how much time was needed until its power can be mastered.

However, the rude man before him should have only just inherited the <King Sword> merely several days ago. Even if this man wished for the <King Sword>'s power, if the <King Sword> didn't approve of its user, he shouldn't have been able to wield this power. That being said, the cause for it was due to the safety mechanism endowed in the <King Sword> which restricted its ability for an inexperienced user to protect himself, and could be said that it was because the user was simply inexperienced and didn't understand the ability of the <King Sword>. However it was a fact, for the <King Sword>'s inheritor to use the <King Sword> as a crown prince in such a short time was impossible until now.

However, only the man standing before Furederikku showed that he endured his hard () sword using the <King Sword>.

Since the fact that the <King Sword> wasn't scratched was due to its ability, Furederikku's pride wasn't wounded but, he felt shaken by the reality that the young man who was just inaugurated as the crown prince received his sword strike.

That unrest was also transmitted to Lectival and he slipped words in between the gap created.

–The <King Sword> exerts its power to protect this country. For this reason, it bestows its power onto me now. You should be able to understand this significance, Red Dragon Duke.

Furederikku groaned a single word and fell into silence at the words of Lectival, who though quelled his anger like a machine; hidden fury was seething behind that dragon eye.

Even he understood now.

Until now, the crown prince didn't wield the <King Sword> as Emperor

immediately was simply because the situation didn’t call for it.

They were protected by guards until the previous Emperor’s mourning ended and received the enthronement’s ceremony; hence the reason and intent to wield the <King Sword> didn’t exist since they were never exposed to danger. That was why the <King Sword>’s power didn’t manifest; hence it became common knowledge that the new Emperor who had just finished the accession couldn’t use the <King Sword> before the enthronement.

However, the young man who had become the crown prince was holding onto it presently.

Repelling foreign enemies, destroying domestic troubles, and protecting the important people residing in this country.

Hence, the <King Sword> granted the user’s wish to protect the Empire.

Assuming that I was in your position, I also wouldn’t consider to pledge loyalty to a crown prince who appeared suddenly and had yet to receive the accession. However, loyalty and such can be postponed; at worst, even if you still don’t have it, I also wouldn’t mind.

Lectival addressed the three people while remaining in the posture of stopping Furederikku’s sword.

What was needed now was not sword, but determination.

Nay, the present him had only determination. He who possessed neither personal connections nor fortune nor even experience, had only the will of behaving as the crown prince.

You should have been ordered to protect the Empire since the founding Emperor. And that shouldn’t have changed even in the present era.

The matter about the three people choosing to dispatch troops here could probably be inferred as the collapse of the capital’s front-line.

The capital wasn’t just merely the capital city of the Empire.

The history of the Empire that began from the first Emperor’s declaration of

founding a nation was packed into the capital <Exceed>.

Allowing foreign countries to trample down on it was akin to wounding the Empire’s existence, hence they chose to fight. In all certainty, it was probably a path that could resolve things in a short time.

However Lectival said that was being impatient.

I shall apologize for the present Emperor’s barbarism in his place. Therefore, I wish for my opinion to be taken into consideration for just this battle. Besides, if you judge me to have cause harm on this country, I wouldn’t mind if you cut me down at that time. I shall promise not to resist.

Lectival’s dragon eye watched the three people intently.

It was impossible for the powerful dragon tribe to have dragon eyes of other colours beside gold.

However this crown prince’s eye was a silver dragon eye type which couldn’t be seen in others.

The Emperors until now also possessed similar dragon eyes but their original eye colour remained distinctively in their dragon eyes. Even among them, the thin dragon eye of silver colouring was non-existent until now.

It wasn’t particularly considered special, but just slightly, interest welled up regarding that silver. With eyes that differed from the dragon tribe, what was he seeing now?

—

tashiya!?

Anasutashiya eluded Furederikku’s surprise with a composed blank face, returned to the round table quietly and sat down.

At her sworn friend’s action, Maria shrugged her shoulders in a manner to say it couldn’t be helped anyway and followed.

Carl once again leaked out a sigh of relief secretly and arrived at the round table,

leaving Furederikku alone.

—

The two people’s eyes entwined silently. The intersection of their gazes which couldn’t be said to be glaring at each other; they mutually dispelled doubts in their minds and exchanged looks.

Silver and gold clashed and then separated.

So did their swords.

–Just this time, I’ll listen to your talk in deference to the <King Sword>. Whether I choose to follow or not comes later. You got no complaint right?

You’ve my gratitude.

Snorting his nose in displeasure, Furederikku returned to the round table; at that time, that place became the assembly hall where the next Emperor of the Empire and his authorities congregated.

It went down in history as the unfolding of the Holy City Conference in all the books that recorded this battle.

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Holy City Conference.

Be it elementary, middle or high school, this conference would appear without fail upon opening the Empire history textbooks, and was used to earn marks as an assured question in examinations.

However, since its detailed contents weren’t revealed contrary to its high popularity, researchers came together to research and analyse them. It was to the point where a large scale investigation debate was held to elucidate just one question, making it a theme which always fuelled people’s interest.

A certain researcher once said that the foundation of the group of retainers which supported Emperor Lectival was completed by the end of that conference. Another researcher analyzed that it might have been a business-like exchange

from the start to the end.

For the former’s view, it was something like the four Dukes showing great abilities as the royal family’s retainers after the conference, hence putting an end to the series of disturbances. Since a big job of that extent was done, and just from Lectival making it possible, they who ought to have assessed Lectival as having the ability advocated it.

Contrary, based on the latter, the Lectival of that time had an overwhelming deficiency of experience, hence it was difficult to bring together the four Dragon Dukes. Therefore it was claimed that the three Dragon Dukes used the crown prince as a leader to get a just cause; Lectival only joined in the plan, and the contents of the conference were merely devoted to confirming it.

Both sides’ differences came to an end () at how they view the hero of the latter world that was Lectival.

The former assumed Lectival as a natural hero and considered that part of him to exist since those days; the latter in contrast, thought Lectival as a character that only became a hero ultimately, and that process was the accumulation of his honest behaviour and results.

Nevertheless, there were similarities between both sides. It was the point where the person called Lectival became the leader and triumphed in the battle that happened after the conference.

While it was written down as theMira Plains suppression battlein official documents, people named the first battle where the world learned of Lectival’s reputation as a hero as thecapital recovery battle.

Era 2000 of the Empire calendar, nicknamed Era of the heroes/ Feirudo Igisu (); it was an era where heroes were born and disappeared.

On Almada continent alone, there were the Sun Tiger Hime of <New Almada Imperial>, Red-haired Oni of <Marudouku Kingdom>, Magic Bullet Queen of <The Free City-States of the Holy Symbol Federation>, Iron Blood Prince of <Shierumia Republic> and Star Dragon King of <Arutodesutenia Empire>.

(, , , , )

If seen on a global scale, heroes numbering several times appeared.

Hereafter, one disappeared silently, another died a brilliant noble death, the other returned to his/her original life while the last lived as a hero until dying of old age.

Which way of living was the correct one was something that they didn't know.

However, what can be said for sure was that one person among them changed the mindset of a country's people.

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Once the conference had ended, Lectival bid farewell to Carl and while giving words of thanks to the occasionally passing-by knights on patrol, he returned to his room.

However, dragging his mind and body that were fatigued from the conference that had continued endlessly, his mental weariness accumulated further upon returning to his room.

—

Mu~~Lectival-sama…

Lect…idiot…I don't care…

Unbeknownst to him, Ririshia and Meriela were sleeping pleasantly on the the excessively vast bed.

For a moment, he wondered what the knights in charge of security were doing, but upon reflecting back, a mere knight couldn't have stopped these two people.

-Even for me, it's not like I don't feel anything but

When he caught a glimpse of the pair who was in delicate transparent sleep-wear appearances that made him troubled on where to look, he felt overwhelmed instantly. Wasn't their relationship bad, such a doubt surfaced in his mind. Naturally, his doubt had to wait until the next morning to be clarified.

However both were maidens of lovely looks. Based on various things such as this was Lectival's bedroom etc., there shouldn't be any complaints even if he attacked them as they were.

Nevertheless, his iron wall of reasoning was brought into question when he seriously thought about young unmarried women being in a man's room without putting on clothes.

There was a reason to back away from that excessive scene which was beyond the scope of common knowledge, but that was better left unsaid. Moreover, it wasn't certain that his reasoning could continue being an iron wall. Even a refined iron would deteriorate.

Ah, mou

Late at night, he was at a loss in the great temple's living room.

Since he ended up being timid, he wasn't able to choose the option of having someone to prepare a new room; and naturally, he couldn't climb onto the bed where those two were sleeping. Iya, truthfully there wasn't a problem if he did that, but he was inexperienced and somehow lack the decisive courage to do it.

Eventually, he borrowed only a sheet of covering cloth from the bed and laid down on a long leather chair placed in the room's centre.

Hereupon, the tiredness until now closed in at once, and he entered the dream world in less than several minutes. To maintain and optimize its ability, the <King Sword> seemed to demand rest from the user.

Kuka-…

And thus the Empire's crown prince Lectival Ruitsu=Rorudo Eruvihhi's first day of living as the crown prince reached its closure.

Although he made a grand yell during the next morning, at the very least he raised a carefree sleeper's breathing during this point of time.

—hekushi (TN: onomatopoeia for sneezing)

And an idiotic sneeze too.

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(TN: Vilia's PoV)

As I thought, Vilia-chan's muscles are superb, is it from your Tou-sama's blood I wonder?

Thank you very much!

I loved that smile which praised me when I was receiving sword practices in the castle's garden.

Our child doesn't seem to like swordsmanship very much…since this's a rare opportunity, I'll teach Vilia-chan all of my swordsmanship. Arufuodo ( ) swordsmanship is a swordsmanship of great physical power, so it's better to memorize a little of light and fast swordsmanship like mine right?

Hai, I'll do my best!

I loved the palm of that person who taught me swordsmanship and etiquette besides official business.

Ah mou, though it's fine to be mischievous, what will you do if a scar remain on your face? It can't always be cured completely like out child's you know?

Gomennasai…

I loved the fingers of that person who caressed my face while looking troubled.

Hora kawaii! It was worthwhile to request Ruiizu and Rushetto's baked sweets emptied the purse () considerably but

Oku-sama…It's difficult to move about.

I loved the elated smile shown by that person who used me as a dress-up doll.

I admired that person. 'I want to be like her,' I thought.

That was why I gave my all in practising swordsmanship, etiquette and dancing.

'I want to become a beautiful, strong and kind person like her,' I thought.

And yet-

This child, please look after Meriela.

It became a separation with such a really sorrowful face.

If I were stronger, more prudent and had the courage to stop the young mistress, that tragedy could have been avoided.

—Vilia-chan

Whenever I thought so, I would see such nightmares.

The person whom I admired would stare at me with a resentful look.

With half of her body lost and her remaining half hideously burnt, she had a pale face.

—Vilia-chan, that child

I understood. It was obvious.

My raison d’etre was to protect that child. There wasn’t any other way of living. It wasn’t worthwhile to live on.

If I don’t think that way, I’ll be crushed by the guilt.

—Vilia-chan

I loved her very much. I thought of her as a real elder sister.

There wasn’t anyone that was stronger or prettier than her. I had always thought so.

—Vilia-chan

I, who had killed such a person, cannot allow myself to live for my own sake.

(TN:Back to 3rd PoV)

She lived only to protect that child.

That’s why, please forgive me.

Therefore, she shed tears alone today once more.

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Consort knight Vilia.

In the life to come, she was a character that didn’t remain on most of the documents, as if erased by somebody. However, there were several materials where her deep relation with Lectival could be conjectured from.

Among them was her grandchild—however, there were various opinions regarding the blood relationship—a relative-written biography, and also depicted stories; though their contents differed greatly from historical facts.

However, to what extend was it created, and from where was it the truth, the answer couldn’t be found beyond the non-existent reliable documents, regardless of how different they might be, that recorded her lifetime.

There was a town’s record of her being Lectival’s lover, and because she wasn’t mentioned in the royalty’s registry, she became a consort who had her name changed. Otherwise, she had the position of a lover that wasn’t listed in the royalty registry. There was also an opinion of her name simply being deleted from the royalty registry.

If there was anyone doubting the authenticity of the record of that lover, it was Lectival’s matchless companion. As a matter of fact, there was antagonism concerning consort Meriela. For the sake of becoming a bride to a foreign country because of Lectival, the theory concluded that her name wasn’t left behind in the Empire’s record.

The basis for the last theory was a document saying that Lectival at the time of his regency, married off a Vilia-like woman to the<Marudouku Kingdom>, but that document had many discrepancies with historical facts and the truth couldn’t be explicated.

In stage plays, there were scenes where she loved Lectival more than Meriela and consequently neglected her original mistress, Meriela; as well as losing her life after getting embroiled in the Empresses’ dispute; and also

heading to the battlefield where she was killed in action.

As a consort with numerous mysteries—though it was strictly concluded that she wasn't a consort—she kindled people's creative urges, but based on the historical documents of relatively high credibility which was Empress Meriela's record that was left behind, it seemed certain that she crossed swords with Lectival every day when young.

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She didn't want to remember the moment when she entered the room.

However, when she became aware that the person who was more important than her own life was sleeping next to somebody, an unstoppable feeling gushed out from the bottom of her heart.

It was the feeling of having her raison d'etre being snatched away.

Don't move from there!

I've to refuse.

If there was somebody to protect that person, then wasn't she unneeded?

(TN: Vilia used  to refer to someone, presumably Meriela but I'll just leave it as it is unless specified.)

If there was somebody next to that person, then wouldn't her place be gone?

Even if you're engaged, you've yet to formally go through a wedding! Do you think you're permitted to do such thing!?

It isn't of my own volition!

She unhesitatingly swung her sword at those words but the other party evaded the sword's trajectory and rose to the ceiling by kicking the wall.

Such a thing!

She couldn't believe it. That person wouldn't yield her body so easily.

Not everyone can do the training that allowed such rash acts. That person was raised up as a woman who bear the Lindovorum Duke House's future and was to marry to a suitable gentleman at an appropriate time.

Why, you…!

Why? Why is it so?

If it wasn't someone with stronger power, that person cannot be protected.

That person had waited for a long time. Once Vilia had accomplished her duty, she thought to end herself.

Can the you who is being protected by hime-sama protect her?!

This man who didn't possess any power and even his memories were uncertain, was the weakest man in that castle.

Certainly, she knew that he endeavoured to study frantically to learn about this world, but that was precisely why she couldn't accept it.

Hime-sama…doesn't live just for your sake!

She reached for the sword belt fixed onto her thigh with her hand and gripped three throwing knives. After throwing them upwards, she followed behind, and she thought so while running.

'Ah, saying whatever I want for my own's convenience.'

'I was the one who made an excuse to snatch away that person's family, so am I even qualified to interfere with that person's way of living?'

Don't run away! Show that you can defeat me without running away!

In an unstable posture while in mid-air, Lectival caught all the knives thrown towards him, and converting them to light, he transferred them somewhere.

Within the time-span of that series of actions, she shortened the distance at once.

Lectoooh!

She unhesitatingly swung down her sword. Raising a metallic shriek, the blade's edge which should have rotated entwined with a slender sword blade.

(TN: Imagine Vilia's sword as a chainsaw where the outer edge rotates around the blade)

You've finally called out my name.

Don't screw with me!

Landing on the floor, they jumped out towards the temple's courtyard.

There weren't any figures of Shinto priests or knights around.

However, Vilia wasn't aware of that since she didn't have any leeway while dealing with Lectival.

As a combat veteran, Vilia's movements were too fast for Lectival who had just inherited the <King Sword>.

Although he hadn't received a blow yet due to the <King Sword>'s reaction speed, he didn't have the room to be watchful of the surrounding.

Besides, there was something else that caught his attention.

Even I'd be troubled in how to deal with you if you're to pursue me while having such a painful expression.

I don't have such a face!

The <Cave Dragon Cutter>'s (Vilia's sword) driving force system emitted a warning of overloading. Its edge's rotation was forcibly suspended and thin white fume arose from its driving force part.

Let go!

Maa, I don't mind but

Since Vilia shouted, Lectival readily released the <Cave Dragon Cutter> but its driving force part performed an emergency shutdown due to an abnormal overheating.

Aah

Even so, Vilia raised the <Cave Dragon Cutter> overhead towards Lectival.

It still possessed cutting ability to some degree even without its rotation, and besides, she seriously couldn’t stomach the calm face of the man before her.

Even if the other party is the crown prince, she couldn’t drive it out of her consciousness completely.

Was she that frenzied from having Meriela snatched away and genuinely distancing herself away from Lectival?

She swung the <Cave Dragon Cutter> downwards without even trying to find the answer.

Otto

The <Cave Dragon Cutter> sank into ground while blowing up large amount of earth and as time elapsed, Vilia’s movement became crude.

Lectival saw that perfectly, but regardless of how many times the unified <King Sword> informed him of counterattack chances, he wouldn’t raise his hand against Vilia.

Avoiding <Cave Dragon Cutter>, he ran across the courtyard towards the artificial woods in the garden.

Vilia’s movement became increasingly dull among the trees.

To avoid contact between the <Cave Dragon Cutter> and the trees and shrubs, she was compelled to not do any unnecessary movements.

Didn’t I tell you not to escape!

I’d be hit if I didn’t.

In that case, Vilia’s heirloom treasure sword would have injured the crown prince.

Even if Lectival didn’t view it as a problem, the surrounding people would

probably distanced themselves from Vilia.

That was something that Lectival didn’t wish for.

Please calm down.

I’m calm…

Both of them knew that wasn’t the case.

Vilia cried out with tears welling up in the corners of her eyes, and those tears caused Lectival’s chest to creak.

Please lower that sword.

When he said that, he received a single strike of that great sword as a reply.

Lectival retreated into the dense and overgrown woods while sidestepping the <Cave Dragon Cutter>, and picked out a single tree among them. The tree which he located had a trait unlike others based on the <King Sword>’s optical information analysis.

Vilia-san.

Calling out her name as gently as possible, the frenzied Vilia drew close.

Straightforward, like her conviction and way of life.

Why, now, you!

If this person was slightly stronger than her and had mastered the <King Sword>, she might not have made such a face to him.

Even a smiling face, angry face, troubled face or an embarrassed face would be fine.

It was just that she wasn’t very good with a tear-stained face.

—I don’t understand very well either.

He couldn’t understand the reason for him to be here or why his future became

one where he had to handle the <King Sword>.

Then…!

However, Vilia-san

There were things that even such a him could understand.

Something beyond reason concluded that the woman before him was important, and this was also affirmed by his feelings.

It can’t be helped that Vilia-san is important to me.

—! Such a thing, such a thing…!

Maa, simply put

Thus in a word.

It’s love at first sight.

–Eh?

*Gashan*, the <Cave Dragon Cutter> fell onto the ground.

Vilia grasped the handle feebly and looked at Lectival with rounded eyes.

Her eyes swarm around and she opened her mouth partially without meaning to.

That facial expression of that extent was sufficient to be called dumbfounded.

Therefore—

I wish it’s about time for you to put down that sword—but those words didn’t reach Vilia.

fu

fu?

Her face was dyed deep red, her shoulders trembled, and her eyes became

watery. She raised the <Cave Dragon Cutter> overhead.

Lectival’s complexion turned pale at once.

Eh

She concluded with a truly meaningless single word and swung down the <Cave Dragon Cutter>.

Coincidentally, a scream offujakennyacould be heard at various places of the temple.

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When expressing the man called Lectival, people will unanimously say that women are indispensable.

The numerous women, who were the Empress, consorts, concubines and in a couple relationships with him, originally had either a friend or rival relationship; naturally, Lectival didn’t lack male friends and rivals, but in the case where his life was depicted as a story, there were many situations where women were emphasised. Hence it wasn’t unthinkable for groundless rumours ofLectival the woman admirerto emerge due to that reason.

Compared to foreign countries’ despotic rulers, it was hard to think that Lectival had a history of love affairs with women, yet this kind of reputation was established due to a certain information manipulation; it was an established theory of the present.

Among the women, there were the five princesses of the four dragons including <Dragon Princess of White Scale> Meriela. It was well-known that they were loved by the people to the extent of being portrayed as protagonists in several stories.

However, if there were Empresses who were out in the sun, there were also Empresses that were in the shadow and didn’t leave their names behind in history.

To say of consort Aria, she might be a person whose name was comparatively known among the latter.

As a result from accepting many nobles' children for manners apprenticeship, she had huge influence over the nobles. She was thereby either called a wicked woman who led the nobles by the nose or a saintess that strive for harmony between the lord and vassal.

It wasn't wrong to say that her life began from when she was presented to Lectival.

As the mistress of Marie imperial villa, Aria raised seven children with Lectival, but from the note left behind by a woman under her manners apprenticeship, the one who initiated their meeting wasn't Aria. That very woman then married to a neighbouring country's crown prince with Lectival's mediation and was loved by the people as a go-between of both countries' friendship.

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Indeed, she had a figure that was the embodiment of every man's ideal.

Overall, her body was slender and though was by no means sensual, it didn't lose its beauty.

As she was to be 'presented' to the crown prince, her pale pink hair was close to white. Undulating gently, it danced lightly in Lectival's vision, and the white strands which stood out among that hair was arranged separately into parts. In terms of pure beauty, she might be more refined than Meriela who was hailed as a beautiful maiden in the Empire's high society.

However, he felt that something was amiss.

(Ah, such a doll-like beauty…)

To be chosen and brought up to such a figure merely for the sake of pleasing men.

She had good looks for this reason.

It wasn't in the realm of plastic surgery or body remodelling.

They were raised without being given other alternatives.

They weren’t taught that other paths existed and were only given information which weren’t general knowledge without holding any doubts. They were kept alive to dedicate their all for just a handful of men.

And now, before Lectival was the Bud Princess.

In the event of knowing man and becoming a flower/beauty (), she was the highest gradebudto the point of being calledQueen of Flower.

She introduced herself as Aria very courteously.

Has Your Highness already finished bathing?

Seeing Lectiva’s figure, she said so and hid her slightly troubled face.

From that gesture, he could roughly understood what kind of instruction she had received from Mireideia but, what, it wasn’t strange considering Mereideia’s habitual speech and conduct.

He didn’t want to be too deeply involved with the existence called Aria if possible and chose his words prudently.

I’m tired so I’ll be retiring early.

By reducing his words, it became difficult for his feelings to be conveyed to the other party.

Having implicitly conveyed that he would rest after this, she would leave from here before he treats her as his hands () .

(TN:  showed result of ‘manner of using one’s hands’. Source: Jisho)

As for him, he thought that at the time of meeting, the obligation to various related places would be fulfilled for the time being.

That being the case, he hoped for her to withdraw quickly.

Lectival was also a man. His heartbeat would quicken if a beautiful woman was before him, but it was easy to understand that the woman called Aria was here with vague feelings that cannot be called her will.

To get involved now, will it not become regrets later as expected? —Lectival ended up thinking so.

Sou, desuka…

Yet it didn’t seem like Aria understood his intention, or possibly, she was strongly given detailed instructions from her superior.

She feebly grasped the hem of her dazzling dress that exposed her bare body more than the clothes which Meriela usually wore in terms of shoulders, back and breasts. She then stole flickering glances towards the door connected to the bedroom. ‘Is this what I think it is?’ she thought and now looked up to Lectival’s face enquiringly.

Perchance, Lectival’s recent words might be interpreted as going along with her assigned task.

She couldn’t hide any of her nervousness and spoke with a quivering voice.

Then, in that room…

Ah, just like he thought.

Lectival restrained himself from holding his head, and shook horizontally. While paying close attention to not sound oppressive, he opened his mouth.

Iya, it’s unnecessary.

Nonetheless, his voice was stiff in the end.

Lectival noticed that the shoulders of the woman before him—possibly a maiden —trembled at his words and shut his mouth,

He then thought ‘by some chance, does she only know men besides me indirectly?’

Even if she was taught knowledgeable technique to please man, he doubted she had affirmed it on a real man.

Thinking until here, Lectival realized another fact.

(–What would she become if I were to send her back from here?)

Abudwho was rejected by the crown prince.

Certainly, her looks was probably appropriate to become the object of lust of men from the continent much less the empire, but how was it in reality? Her situation was different from Meriela and Ririshia.

To the people who brought her up, what does it mean for her to return back without doing anything—without having sexual relations?

It was obvious. The time, labour and gold invested into her until now had mostly vanished into the air.

Naturally, since it was impossible to give up because of that, she might be once more presented to a man of lower rank than Lectival. However, would the other party possibly want a leftoverfrom the crown prince? Iya, even if the person himself wishes for it, would the surrounding allow it? In the first place, would nobles or big merchants want a failed workthat didn’t measure up to the crown prince-denka’s standards?

They also have their vanity. It’s different when bestowed directly from the crown prince, but to assign a woman akin to disposing of stock, their pride might be remarkably wounded.

Her value as the highest gradebudwould crash to the ground as Lectival wasn’t pleased with her. In that case, will she have to consider of picking up clients as a prostitute of good appearance for big earnings?

Wasn’t the fate of thisbudwho knew nothing of general knowledge, the society and men decided upon being summoned into this great temple today?

Wasn’t she forced into an unpleasant situation where she could by no means escape from?

When he thought until there, Lectival understood everything upon seeing the frightened figure of Aria looking at him.

‘—Ah, so this’s a crown prince, an Emperor is it?’

Driven by a sense of justice and chivalrous spirit from within him and resenting people who treat others as objects, immersing in self-satisfaction and sending her back later; a fine existence that didn't realize or consider what will become of her fate thereafter.

(TN: Self-mockery)

(It was not a reality that he didn't want to understand.) (1)

That's right.

He couldn't allow himself to judge something with the sense of values from those days.

When he died in that world, that world's sense of value was lost; rot and faded away altogether. That couldn't be used comfortably like before, in substitution, he could only change to the device that was himself.

(TN: Means he's relying on his own judgement.)

Just before the inheritance ceremony, Mireideia had said to him, 'when you give up the act of giving up'.

However, what can be done? Reality was faster than that and it was said it advanced even faster than giving up and going forward.

He was told to give up and resign.

If that's an Emperor is,

If he's a person who make the best use of things and kills,

Giving up repeatedly, even so, the world said to him who had given up and moved forward,

'Is it really fine to give up everything?'

Although it knew the answer that he would reply with, it still asked.

(This is, is this how an Emperor should be?

Owning the rights to easily cut down life, to oppress another person; a supreme fool that have the right to disregard all sense of values,

Holding onto the pride of being a fool, to not forget being a fool and a fool that doesn’t feel ashamed of living the life of a fool,

At the end of giving up on himself was a feast of fool.

What—isn’t an Emperor a fool among the fools?

It was simple. In order to live wisely, this body had grown a lot[2].

This body can only live a life appropriate for it[3].

Yoshi

Then he’ll live in his own way. Without being afraid of what others may think, to live fondly as an Emperor.

Eh, ano…?

Aria raised her face at the words leaking out from Lectival’s mouth.

Looking at that puzzled face, he resolved himself and decided.

Is there anything that you like?

Eh…?

Aria seemed bewildered at Lectival’s question.

It was natural. She was thrown an ambiguous question without any logical connection; only the likes of young children wouldn’t be troubled by this.

However, was it because she thought of him as another party that she was troubled for a short moment? She answered to gauge Lectival’s response.

Flower, I like Marie flowers.

Lectival nodded his head at that reply. He thought it was very reasonable.

As if making an important decision, he took two to three deep breaths, and faced Aria. Silently, he placed his hands on both shoulders of thepresented article before him.

He ignored the trembling of Aria’s body and like an Emperor, he was arrogant.

And he informed her, with arrogant words no more than this.

Just like the people wished, like an Emperor.

Hereafter, I’ll take care all of your time. In return, whenever you desire, just wish for it, I’ll send you Marie flowers. Only I can grant your desire. Only I can create your future. And likewise, only I can make up for that reparation.

While gazing into Aria’s surprised face, Lectival crushed something inside of him.

They were the former him, the him as a crown prince, and now, the him standing before Aria yet thinking of wanting to escape from this place.

Shameful and most of all, he was irritated by his shameful side, but consequently he was able to decide.

It wasn’t only the others that killed the Emperor, he killed himself.

Putting in his body and soul, he had to devote to killing the existence that was himself. He tried to use that woman called Aria as an impetus.

Therefore, become a blooming flower in my garden for as long as you live.

‘Kuso’, he cursed the vocabulary of his worthless self.

There ought to be something more he should say. There had to be other words left to be said.

Thinking to the extent of such thoughts, the words would’t come out.

Therefore, he gave up on words, but he embraced the woman presented to him closely like anger[4].

Ah, this wonderful yet foolish world.

He gave up; he cannot forget his former world in this world.

However, even if he gave up, he'd still advance.

Even if he gave up everything, he'd still move forward.

And don't forget, *I* was here.

Lectival Ruitsu=Rorudo Eruvihhi was here.

Not the Emperor, but as an Emperor[5].

Even in this world, that alone had no dictated reason[6].

◊◊◊

The tomboyish and foremost consort Ririshia.

It's said that the person herself preferred to be addressed as Ririshia Eruvihhi.

She became the leading consort of a large country at the mere age of fourteen, yet contrary to that alias, she didn't stand out particularly and passed a tranquil life when compared to other consorts.

Giving birth to a child and protecting her family, her life as the leading consort was complete.

She was extremely tomboyish when she was younger and would head out to the castle town accompanied by a few escorts; a fact that only a minority knew. There were also people from the castle town population that dared to approach her, but without coming into contact, despite knowing her true identity.

There were various figures of Ririshia from these eyewitnesses reports; fishing in the harbour, falling into a river, unable to descend from a treetop, sampling food from various food stands, reading while standing in a bookstore and getting yelled at by the shopkeeper, playing cards with elementary school students, caressing pregnant women's stomachs in the park, smiling happily etc. These descriptions could be seen more vividly from the townsfolk's diaries than

the royal family official records.

Even after giving birth, she still went out to the castle town but now together with her child. Her first child was Lectival's sixth child, yet as the first male, he courted and wedded a woman from the town. Hence it could only be thought of as the influence from the education of those days.

(TN: Referring to the time that Ririshia's child spent with her in the castle town.)

◊◊◊

A lone figure was advancing lightly along the great temple's corridor.

A simple sleeveless outer garment yet adorned with refined ornaments and a short kasahakama where a pair of slender white legs extended out.

She had many ornamental cords on her swaying jade-coloured hair and everyone who bowed upon seeing her at the corridor smiled broadly at her happy appearance.

An escort clergy knight among them enquired her.

Where're you heading to, Your Grace?

To Lectival-sama's place

As a matter of fact, the answer was obvious without the need to ask.

She ventured to ask because an 'I want you to ask' expression was written on Ririshia's face.

Isn't His Highness still in the midst of his work?

Ee, therefore I thought to surprise him with a sudden visit and there's also something I've to tell Maria-dono

In front of the Miko-hime that had finished laying out the groundwork, the knight bowed with a bitter smile.

Is that so? Then, have a safe trip

Hai!

‘It was as if she had grown wings,’ perhaps such words could be used to describe this spectacle.

The knight saw off the Miko-hime who hopped off with a systematic *tontoton, tontoton* sound.

Reaching the <glasshouse>, Ririshia confirmed Lectival’s whereabouts with the two knights standing on guard at the entrance.

Hearing that he was still in the middle of carrying out government affairs, she muttered ‘I’m glad’ and sat on a nearby bench.

Swinging both feet in high spirits, she hummed a song while glancing at the <glasshouse>’s entrance many times over.

The escort knights stood at the entrance without the slightest movement, but perhaps it was unavoidable for them to direct their gazes towards the Miko-hime occasionally.

They didn’t know Ririshia was such a cheerful and lively young maiden.

When she sat still, she gave off an ephemeral impression.

Yet a complete change came about from the appearance of one young man.

The present Ririshia bustled around the great temple’s interior every day, and scattered a smile befitting of her age at various places.

Even the Shinto priests who admonished her conduct were scarce, and it was only to the degree of warning her with a smile.

If there was someone who rebuked her the strongest, it’d be the White Dragon princess.

His Highness will come anytime now, Your Grace

Being informed by the knights on guard duty, Ririshia, *pyonto*, stood up from the chair, arranged her personal appearance and finally did a quick turn before

the knights.

Is there any place that seems strange?

The answer had already been decided when they were asked.

The two knights matched their voices and,

Hai, you look beautiful

*Patto* Ririshia’s expression sparkled from that reply.

Seeing Ririshia gazing towards the entrance cheerfully, the knights frantically maintained their expressions from crumbling.

Rather than being appropriate for one’s age, many actions of hers gave the impression of being more childish than her actual age.

It might not necessary be a lie to say that a part of the court ladies were besotted by Ririshia.

While the knights were thinking so, the entrance to the <glasshouse> opened.

–Attention

Together with the sound of metal scrapping, the two knights lifted up their swords.

Once Lectival who appeared from the door returned their salute, they lowered their swords and went back to standing at attention.

It has been hard for you, be at ease

Ha

A second wave of metal scrapping resounded. The knights spread their feet shoulder width apart and released the surplus energy that they had saved up.

Lectival-sama!

Ah, Ririshia. What’re you doing here?

Isn’t it obvious! I want to go on a walk with Lectival…

‘I see,’ Lectival soliloquized and looked behind.

He nodded towards Blue Dragon Duchess Maria and the several civil officials who were summoned to the temple.

Then, follow everything as planned

Ha

Except Maria, the civil officials departed with a bow. At any rate, it seemed difficult for them to walk while carrying the documents.

Maria too, I’ll entrust them to you

Hai, Your Highness

In the midst of a graceful bow, Maria winked at Ririshia.

Ririshia nodded without Lectival realising and the silent exchange between the pair came to an end.

Sending off Maria who walked away quietly, Lectival enquired Ririshia.

Regarding Meriela…

She’s working

It was an immediate reply.

Lectival gave a bitter smile when Ririshia’s tone became stiff and sharp,
and spoke out his true feelings with aplease try to get along even if it’s just a little.

But there’s only one Lectival-sama

Even if I can split myself into two, will there be any difference?

As Lectival began walking, Ririshia clung onto his arm and brought her body closer.

If he were to ask “wouldn’t it be hard to walk like this?” he’d received an “it’s alright” and a smile.

–It’s fine to split into two, but the real one belongs to me

Then nothing will change

Ee, therefore I won’t mind if you don’t split. Please look at me properly

“Yareyare,” Lectival shook his head while stroking the head of Ririshia who had inflated her cheeks.

Ririshia’s feelings were understandable, but if the cause was the system known as polygamy, a drastic solution might be difficult.

He understood this when working as the crown prince, that it was necessary to be an arbitrator while acting as a ruler.

Mediating between government agencies and coordinating with fellow vassals. If that couldn’t be done, then the Empire couldn’t function satisfactorily as a country.

Coordination was a simple yet important task. A country that had forgotten it would rot little by little from its tips. There were many instances where it was already too late by the time the country’s centre noticed it.

The Imperial was a typical bad example. In places that were out of the centre’s sight, the local officials and soldiers were indulging in their self-interest however they pleased.

There might be some people among the centre who were aware of the existing state, but weren’t able to capitalise on that information. He’d never want to acquire such a place.

As an organisation’s lubricant, an arbitrator’s absence is directly connected to a country’s destiny.

And an arbitrator is indispensable in connecting people extensively.

Lectival-sama is the crown prince and it’s not my intention to say to have a

hundred or two hundred concubines. However, it’s a given to look at me properly right?

A hundred, two hundred…

It differed from his guess by a single digit and Lectival felt slightly complicated.

The number was excessively great and exceeded the category of his imagination.

Lectival-sama? Are you listening properly?

Ee, of course

Then look at me more. Whether this hairstyle is nice or whether such clothes is to your liking, please teach me various things

Being told such, Lectival once again looked at Ririshia.

Ririshia too, looked up at Lectival fixedly.

How’s today’s clothing and hairstyle?

Eeto, they suit you well

In what way?

Lectival fell forward when his arm was pulled with a jerk.

A soft and warm sensation was transmitted from his arm that had drawn close to Ririshia’s chest.

Let’s see…

Lectival placed his hand on his chin and gazed at Ririshia from top to bottom.

Ririshia blushed and hid her face.

That, as I thought, it’s better to have a figure that’s a bit more feminine. Tentatively, eat your meal while considering its nutrition, and persevere in doing morning and evening exercise but…

Ririshia had endeavoured without fail due to the hope that was her elder sister, but it was a surreptitious distress to her that her body didn't even reach the average of the fourteen years old of her race.

(TN: She hopes to inherit Mireideia's figure.)

Ie, either way, only time will tell. For me, if Ririshia's healthy, that's…

But…!

When Ririshia was about to continue her words, Lectival placed his index and middle fingers on her lips.

Lectival exhaled a sigh at the bewildered Ririshia.

Lately, there has been several problems arising from women relations which I can do nothing about, but isn't there something like divination?

Mu–u

Ririshia raised a voice of protest at Lectival's words.

It seemed like he wanted to ask about what he should do in an area that he had no experience in.

How should I say, I'd like to put in various efforts. Similar to Ririshia

Mu–?

Ririshia tilted her head.

I wasn't aware since I didn't have any important things before, but I want to become a person that has important things and would calmly do rash acts to protect them

It'd be similar to the devotion that Vilia had for Meriela.

The important things would varied from gold, status, women, family or friends to loyalty etc depending on the person.

Meriela and Vilia-san are important to me and I'm afraid to lose Aria and

Ririshia. The status and authority of the crown prince aren’t visible, but I can see and touch Ririshia and the others. I feel that Ririshia and the others are the more important things to me

Mu

Ririshia nodded meekly.

Therefore, I want to help the Ririshia who’s troubled by various things in some way. And no matter how many times you want to consult with me, I’ll cooperate. In exchange, I want you to stay close to me but

Mu!?

A surprised Ririshia looked up at Lectival.

Ah-, come to think of it, I haven’t said it to anybody with such intention you know? Ah, since it’s just right, shall we go along with it here?

Lectival knelt in front of Ririshia and smiled while clasping her hand.

Ririshia

Ha, hai!

Lectival’s smile deepened from Ririshia’s shrill voice.

There might be various things, but please be within my reach. I can’t help but feel uneasy when you’re out of my reach

Ririshia’s eyes became dots from Lectival’s manner of speaking, but after discerning his real intentions behind those words immediately, she turned bright red.

Ano…that is…

It means my best regards for hereafter

Answering Ririshia, Lectival’s fingers entwined with hers.

He had joined hands with Meriela before, but Ririshia’s was one size smaller.

What do you think?

Ririshia nodded greatly.

Hai! I may be inexperienced but please do treat me well!

End of Chapter 6

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